The Home God Meant

George N. Lysaght

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Central BAPTIST THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

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DR. ROBT. I. WILSON

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The Home God Meant

By

George N. Luccock

Pastor of the College Church

Wooster, Ohio

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TO
MY WIFE
DEAR MATE AND MAKER OF THE HOME
GOD MEANT FOR ME

26625

FOREWORD

AS the title indicates, the goal of these pages is the picturing of such a home as God would have men and women enjoy. However far short of the goal the reader, on reaching the last page, may feel that the writer has fallen, it is hoped that at least there will have been suggested a vision of The Home God Meant, with some measure of quickening to strive toward its attainment.

The viewpoint of the book is that of the Master as he faced the home situation of his day. There were good homes then. He had been reared in one of them. It is not hard to see in his sayings many a reminiscence of the gracious home life that had sheltered his childhood and youth. But it was not so in all of the homes. Even religious leaders were sanctioning many a false standard of home relations.

Jesus met such misguided teachings by saying that it was not so in the beginning. He would show us that the way up to better homes is the way back to the beginning, back to what was in the mind of God when he made man in his own image, male and female.

This viewpoint is followed throughout the book. The attempt is made to range widely

through matters of home interest, from the day of marriage to the day of giving in marriage; from that day when young man and maiden forsake fathers and mothers to cleave to each other, for better or for worse, to that other wedding day, day of trust, when these twain in turn give son or daughter to forsake them and cleave to other flesh and blood. In every chapter, from whatever angle the home and the home folks are viewed, their tasks, their joys, and their sorrows, their mistakes and their sins and their repentings, their new starts and their hopes, always the point of view is what God has given us to understand of his creative purpose in making man in his own image, male and female.

It is believed that a thoroughly Christianized home life would be one of the greatest forces in Kingdom progress. It is the earnest prayer of the writer that these modest pages may make some little contribution to that Christianizing process.

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CHAPTER I

THESE TWAIN

A YOUNG business man and his minister sat together at a business men's luncheon.

"Well, Henry," began the minister, "I see you have had a specially fine New Year's Day. When did your happiness leave town?"

"Yesterday. Unfortunately, being a school-teacher, she is subject to schedule."

"And when are you going to change the schedule?"

"Probably next fall."

"That's just fine. We shall all be mighty glad to have Helen here. Will you buy, or build, or rent?"

"Our plan is to rent for a while. The first winter we will do a lot of thinking and talking and projecting, Then we will either buy, if we can find what suits us, or, preferably, build according to our own ideas. I don't want to get a permanent home all ready before we are married. I want Helen here first, so that her ideas will go into our home."

In that brief parley, the true note in the music of home-building had been sounded. The young man's voice was very gentle, suiting the restraint

upon his spirit, as he spoke of holding all plans in suspension until they could work out their will together. That is the foundation idea for the home God meant.

Just now these two are living many miles apart, engaged in different occupations, or, as it might be said in transposed phrase, in different occupations, engaged. They may have happy thoughts of each other, and dream dreams of and for each other, and it would be entirely possible for the young man to plan, build, and furnish an elegant home, all ready for his bride to enter and be crowned its queen, his queen. But, however nice for her that program might be, however it might ease her of the worries of planning and building, however pleasing to her womanly taste the elegance of her prepared home might be, in entering it in that way she would find it more difficult to become the queen God meant her to be than in the working out of the program these two have planned for themselves.

The ideas of comradeship, mutual interest, mutual rights, mutual responsibility, are rooted and grounded in the beginnings of the joint life of a man and a woman. The moment these ideas cease to be honored, that moment home happiness and home stability are in jeopardy.

In some instances, more common now, doubtless, than formerly, marriage begins on a basis of affluence. There are indeed homes marvelously beautiful in their love and happiness, started on that basis. But the happiness in such homes is not, as many foolishly suppose, due to the affluence, but in spite of it. That is to say, happiness here is built upon the same foundation that happiness is built upon in any home, rich or poor. Lives are bound together by struggle, by aspiration, by reaching with joined hands after what is not yet attained, by sharing work and disappointment and patience and hope, by enduring hard things together, by mutual comfort and cheer, by keeping step all along the rough road, by coming to the goal of success side by side, or side by side facing the fate of defeat, forever feeling that the best of all is that they have each other.

Jesus forced back to the beginning the thoughts of those who were giving religious sanction to loose ideas of the sacredness and inviolability of the marriage bond. He recalled as the ultimatum in the whole problem what had been said in the beginning, when God made man male and female, namely, that these two are to become one flesh. Male and female are different—different by divine purpose, different for human

happiness, different in order to be one, different that each may lack something which the other can supply, different that each may give something needed for the other's completeness, different that each may profit by the strength of both, different that neither alone but both together may build the home God meant. There is nothing known to man more wonderful, more holy, more vital and useful, more capable of glory or degradation, more constructive or destructive of human happiness, than the difference between male and female. Upon that difference the highest home happiness is built. From that difference the most terrible of domestic tragedies spring. It is to be thought about, hallowed, guarded. The appalling record of easy divorce is possible just because men and women fail to guard and hallow and tenderly and devoutly think about the difference between male and female as due to the good hand of our God upon us. In making man male and female, God ordained that in mutual tenderness, in mutual respect, in mutual love, for the increasing joy of both, husband and wife should be one flesh. There can be no safe and sound ideas of home-making save by going back to the beginning, and facing fairly and reverently, modestly

and boldly, what God meant when he made man and woman so to be.

While reverent regard for sex difference will sanctify passion, as it was meant to do, that difference has a wider significance, and plays splendid part in far-reaching ranges of the effort to gain the home ideal. Both physically and mentally, while much alike, man and woman are different. There is a masculine way of looking at things, and there is a feminine way of looking at things. There is a man's way of thinking through a problem, and there is a woman's way of solving that problem. The significant thing is that both of these ways are important. It is to be understood, of course, that this is only a general observation, and not an assertion of an invariable and perfectly obvious line of demarcation between masculine logic and feminine intuition. Upon that difference, which is real, is to be built up by steadfast and uninterrupted devotion the habit of mutual counsel, of complete confidence and frankness. It is always dangerous for a husband or a wife to have a secret from the other, and especially to have an outside intimacy more confidential than that at home.

There is more than one kind of hazard in-

volved when either husband or wife keep the other unadvised of any ambition or purpose or undertaking. For one thing, there is the hazard of making a mistake. No one can afford to ignore the counsel of others. In business matters, about the details of which she knows little, and therefore must guard herself against taking a dictatorial attitude, the wife's intuition is not seldom a surer suggestion of the wise course to be pursued than the husband's reasoned judgment. Her insight into the character of a smooth swindler is often clearer. It would be stupid even to suggest the laying down of an arbitrary rule requiring a husband to submit all business plans to the wife for her decision, or a rule requiring the wife to submit all household problems to the husband for his oracular deliverance upon them. In either case a set of howling complications might ensue. The point is simply this, that counsel with each other, in all matters, is important, all important to both husband and wife, even from the point of view of business prosperity and smooth household management.

But there is another point of view. That is the danger that husband and wife will grow apart, instead of growing together as God meant. It is a sad day in any home, when either of those

who have been mated for life is not interested in and does not care even to talk about what is much in the heart of the other. Too often it happens that, without really having meant to do it, a man and his wife drift into a state wherein it has come to pass that in the main interests of life their ways are as separate and individual as those of two bachelors dwelling on opposite sides of the city. Made one by marriage, they are becoming twain in their minds. It may be that they will have enough decency not to be divorced. But so drifting, so living, they are more and more becoming strangers to the home happiness God meant.

The divine idea is that, just as Henry and Helen purposed in their hearts not to build or even plan a home till they could do it together, taking sweet counsel each of the other, so, all the days of a man with his wife upon the earth, they twain should be one, increasingly one flesh and one mind, continual kindling a common interest in all the things that concern either and both. Each is useless without the other. A certain sad man uttered a great truth in his brief but deeply significant reply to the question, "Where is your home, sir?" "I have no home," he said. "My wife died a year ago."

CHAPTER II

TEAMWORK

TWO married men who had been schoolmates were having a visit. They had been confidential friends in the dormitory, and the most intimate of their confidences had been about a love affair. Now again came a situation for more confidences, more intimate, more revealing, more sacred, than any that had gone before. Each was eager to know, and as eager to tell, how marriage looked from his present viewpoint.

The best that was in that talk is worth telling here. One of them had passed through some rather tempestuous courtship ordeals. It was a case of true love, must have been, for its course had not run at all smoothly. Some of the spiteful had openly condemned his wooing and maliciously hinted of troubles to come. But the troubles went elsewhere. For these two built a home of rare happiness and usefulness. That was because it was started in the right way.

"We began our living together in prayer, audible prayer. Each of us prayed that way. After we had read from the Bible and kneeled, I

offered my petitions for our home, and especially that our God would bless my Mary. When I had finished my prayer, Mary prayed also, more briefly, for she was not used to audible prayer, as I was. She, too, asked that God would bless our home, and make us a blessing to each other. Also she prayed for particular blessings upon me, her husband. It was not an easy thing for either of us at first, but from the first it has been a blessed thing for both. We have found that when husband and wife pray that way together, they cannot get very far apart."

Mark the finding: When husband and wife pray that way together, they cannot get very far apart. That sweetest of all promises to those who pray together, so often quoted as encouragement in a little prayer meeting which ought to be large, is rather suited to the conditions of the home life, even in the beginning of that home when as yet there are but two members. "For where two or three [even but two] are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them." When those whom God has joined together keep the Master's presence in the midst of their home life, no man or woman can put them asunder. They are safe from the eternal

triangle, and all other angles that make sharp corners and bad tempers in the house where people must dwell together.

If there be teamwork in prayer, there will follow teamwork in all the games, and in all the labors, and in all the aspirations, and in all the fightings, and in all the trails of the whole home adventure. For marriage is a great adventure, a potentially continuous romance, with thrills and surprises and mysteries and terrors and ecstasies, sometimes with tragedies, and, to every honest pair, mated in God's will, with assurance of joy unspeakable.

As with most heroic undertakings, the most baffling and difficult hindrance is the unexpected and the uncalculated, and this is often of the pettiest dimensions. One of the five or six greatest engineering feats of all history was the building of the Panama Canal. From many points of view it was difficult and daring. But one of the things that put the enterprise most in jeopardy was just the mosquito, the tiny, terrible mosquito. With the triumph over that menace, success was assured. Of the less than five or six great spiritual engineering feats to which home-building belongs, it may be confidently said that what is hardest to overcome is

resident in little things, little things diffusing deadly poison, turning trust into suspicion, gentleness into harshness, frankness into sullenness, endearments into faultfindings, love into hatred, and issuing in despairing incompatibility.

Let it be taken from God, who made man and woman, and ordained that husband and wife shall cleave to each other until death shall part them, that the whole nagging, buzzing, stinging brood of insect invasions of the home can be destroyed as effectively as mosquitoes were dealt with in the building of the Panama canal. The secret is teamwork in prayer.

Even horses running together in the field from the days when they were little colts until they are broken to harness, must be taught to pull together in order to do good teamwork. So husband and wife, though they have been boy and girl playmates, when their lives are bound together by the vows of marriage, find the need, in this deeper acquaintance, of a new and often not easy mutual adjustment. They must fit themselves to each other. They must learn to pull together in all things. If they find that tastes differ, that eagerness in one is matched by indifference in the other, that what is very much

desired sometimes must be gone without because it is disagreeable to the home companion, and that contrariwise something exceedingly disliked must be endured because it is necessary to the comfort of life's partner, it ought not to be thought that a strange thing has happened, or that these trials are above what is common to homes. Whatever of truth there may be in the saying that opposites attract, it is certain that within the most ardent attraction drawing husband and wife together, there are potential oppositions. Only the silliest of simpletons imagine that true love makes impossible the emergence of differences in desire. It is the mark of true love, not that it prevents temperamental differences, but that, when they occur, love controls and sanctifies them.

Failure to grasp and hold fast to this quite elementary matrimonial truth leads to many a needless wreckage of what might be a very happy home life. Thus it is often hastily assumed, when bad-tempered clashings of will occur, that husband and wife never really loved each other and that therefore it will be better for everyone that they be divorced. It is further assumed that people who once or many times get very angry with each other, can never really and truly

love each other again, even if they once did love devotedly, and that therefore they ought not to try to live together. Also, it is too often assumed that if husband and wife did not really love each other when they were married, it is impossible for them to learn to love each other after marriage, and therefore, having satisfied themselves that it was a mistake for them to get married, they conclude that the only way out of their misery and into happiness is to break their marriage vows. But every one of these is a false assumption. Until comparatively recent times, marriages for the most part were arranged by parents, yet very, very many such marriages were happy. It is quite true that our modern way is vastly superior. But in those earlier days husband and wife often learned to love each other devotedly after they were married. And no matter how little love there may have been at the marriage altar, although it is infinitely desirable that love should precede marriage, yet it is quite possible for it to be developed after marriage. Also, notwithstanding grievous differences and sore alienations, reconcilations are possible, and upon them may be built a wonderfully tender home relation. Furthermore, it is an utterly false assumption that a man and a

woman who really and truly are in love can have no clash of wills, or, that, having had unhappy differences, an all-controlling, fully satisfying love cannot be reënthroned in both of their hearts.

The stupidest of all shallow sayings about wedded life is that marriage is a lottery. One might just as truly say, on the basis of gambler's luck, that business is a lottery. Happy marriages do not happen, any more than normal fortunes.

So, then, home builders have as their mutual task to fit themselves together. They are to discipline themselves in learning the art of pulling together in all things. Their interests, their responsibilities, their undertakings, their whole outlook henceforth must be reckoned one. The romance of home life, more wonderful than the romance of courtship, is meant to be a beautiful blending of the sentimental and the practical, the practical being the trellis on which the arbor growth of sentiment is to be trained. In some things the husband must lead in shaping the program, as, for example, in determining the time of meals in relation to business demands. In some things the wife must lead in shaping the program, as, for example, in arranging social

engagments and in planning odd jobs about the home for holidays and other leisure hours. In some things both must join in shaping the program, as, for example, in planning savings accounts, benevolences, forming church and prayer-meeting habits. These things, and many like them, are important in themselves, belong to the necessities of making a home. They also have a very great indirect relation to the adventure of marriage. The doing of these things, the mutual observance of these relations, now of leadership, now of following, and again of jointly thought-out programs, will tend to perfect the adjustment of life to life, will make the energies of lives which before marriage were separate streams now one current.

One of the great urgencies in the starting of a home is an appreciation of the importance of getting together, and keeping together, of having frequent talks about everything in which either is at all interested, Home life soon gets to going in one of two directions, either in the direction of congeniality or in the direction of incompatibility. Both the virtue and the vice come as a growth. Neither, except in very limited area, is pronounced at the start. No two people ever feel themselves incompatible,

when they are planning the wedding. Therefore, they are never necessarily incompatible. If the mood in which weddings are planned were kept up, no home would ever go to wreck on the rock of incompatibility. Neither are any two people in all things congenial when they are married.

It is quite true that some couples start life together having far more tastes in common than others. But in all cases there are great ranges of congeniality that have to be developed. Be thankful that in all cases this fine asset of the home listed as congeniality may be developed. Happy is that union wherein each one resolves, "I'm going to learn to like the things that my mate likes." There is a companion resolution well worth pondering, namely this: "As for me, I'm going to sacrifice whatever useless habit I have that is offensive to my dear one."

A pair of temptations must be noted in this connection, the one, though not always so, more commonly that of the man, and the other likewise, though not always so, more commonly the temptation of the woman. The temptation more natural to the woman, since it is proper to consider "ladies first," is to be the whole conscience for the home. No good woman has any real

intention of taking advantage of her husband by putting him in the wrong. It is an advantage, however, in defending one's attitude toward a question about which there is a difference of opinion, to reduce that question to a moral issue, and then charge the party of the second part with holding to what is "wrong." It makes anyone, particularly a woman—for it is given to her to lead in appreciation of moral values—inwardly comfortable to feel, in a difference, that one is contending, not for a private opinion, but for righteousness. There is a danger that even a good wife in her zeal for what she considers right may become an unconscious faultfinder, and without knowing it make her husband care more for his club than for his home. It is a delicate responsibility which God has committed to woman in endowing her with so fine a moral sense. The good wife that is of the Lord not only brings moral support to a good man in all his worthiest aspirations, but, even more, she is his inspiration in sheer ability to see which way righteousness leads. A gift so fine, with a use so high, should be zealously guarded against perversion.

The temptation more natural to the husband, just as subversive of home happiness if yielded

to, is to withdraw from social life. He has been grinding all day, has had his temper ruffled a dozen times and his patience tried to the limit, and when the day's work is done he feels that there is no place like home. The wifely suggestion that they return some calls that evening is particularly inopportune. Of course he will not go. It is not to be thought of. But that is not the end of it. It riles him, and keeps him riled, that the suggestion could have been made. If his situation were appreciated, such inopportune suggestions never would be made. Before he knows it, if he is unwatchful, he will habitually come home ready to be irritated by any suggestion that would take him out of his groove. He is grooming to become a grouch. He forgets that while his day has been full of variety, that of his wife has been fairly monotonous. The contacts of the day have sufficed to satisfy any cravings for social touch that may be in his heart. Wife's day, however, especially young wife's day, is normally one of social fasting, unless she has gotten into the currents carrying so many away from home enthusiasms, and, if he does not watch, his irritableness will make her care more for afternoons out than for evenings in, with him at home. And so, while he

earns the living, and does it proudly, and while she keeps his home neat and attractive, and does it loyally, these two, caring for each other, oh, yes, surely caring for each other, are really living quite separate lives. They are developing incompatibility which, while it may not become so bad-tempered as to drive them to the divorce court, does become so real as to cheat them out of the highest home happiness, because, instead of becoming more congenial, they are becoming less congenial.

It behooves both husband and wife to determine to be interested in all that interests either; to study to be approved, each by the other; to keep the door of frankness open between their hearts; to be forever striving to widen the area of things in which they have a common interest, and to keep striving each to reduce as much as may be the area of things in which but one can have an interest; to work toward uttermost, happy congeniality. For they are mated for teamwork so long as both shall live.

CHAPTER III

A LONG LOOK AHEAD

AFTER the marriage ceremony, at the first breakfast by themselves, the bride and groom ought to begin planning their golden wedding. They tell us that the average length of life is on the increase. We read more often than formerly of fiftieth anniversaries. At any rate, homes ought to be started in the expectation of duration, and the people in them ought to live as if they were sure to live together for at least half a century. They ought to resolve to live as they would wish they had done in the year of jubilee.

The owner of a hundred newspapers, possessing great fortune and wide influence, was being interviewed. He had begun in poverty, had toiled the upward road, and had won the summit of wealth and honor. The interviewer asked him to name the maxim that had been of most value to him in his life. His answer was to quote an old saying by Pascal, "To foresee is to rule." An example of his foresight was his recognition of a coming scarcity, if not a famine, in the paper industry. Also he saw how the War might cut off supplies from sources then being

heavily drawn upon. He purchased a tract of woodland embracing three thousand square miles in Newfoundland and developed his own adequate paper industry. The War came, and so did the stringency in the paper market. But he was prepared. He ruled his business because he had foreseen.

It is not required of everyone to be as astute as Lord Northcliffe, or to do business on so vast a scale. But every home builder, to reach his own maximum of happiness and usefulness, must look ahead, must even take a long look ahead. And he must discipline himself to live according to the call of that distant goal. Esau was called a profane person because he did not look ahead, because a present pleasure meant more to him than future service. Many a home has been desecrated in the same spirit. Living for present ease and indulgence, rather than in view of responsibilities bound to come, responsibilities growing of necessity out of home relations, and necessary to the happiest home relations, has meant disappointment, trouble, and bitterness to many a promising home.

An ideal home is a perpetual honeymoon. At Christmas time we talk about having the Christmas spirit throughout the year. In the joy of wed-

ding days, we exclaim, "O that the blessedness of this time might always be in the hearts of these two!" And it may be. It was meant to be. That aspect of the way to have it so with which we are here concerned has to do with conserving the conditions which determine that blessedness. By this is meant learning to do from the beginning those things that make for mutual good will, mutual trust, mutual ministry. And what are the things that make for mutual good will, mutual trust, mutual ministry? Obviously self-denial, thoughtfulness, forethought, anticipating the other's wish and providing to meet it, getting ready for trying experiences so as to ease them as far as possible, dreaming and talking of future good to be enjoyed together. All of which means that two people who expect to live together a long time, and want to live together a long time, need, from the day they begin to live together to put into practice the virtues which common sense tells them will be needed for their comfort in later life. If these virtues are not initiated in the honeymoon, they are apt to be missing when they are most needed, in the dark of the moon.

Among the homely virtues indispensable to making life a continued love story is thrift. It

may be described, for the purpose of this paragraph, as the habit of saving. The point to be here emphasized is that the habit should begin with the first breakfast in the new home. Almost everyone will agree that people ought to start the habit of saving—sometime. It is part of the urgency of this book that, to cultivate the art of living together, married people should begin their joint habit of saving at the time they are married. That is the best time to begin most things that are not easy. And saving is not easy. Like everything else hard to start, it is better begun when the feelings are warmest.

It is rather easier to start saving on a small salary than to start saving on a large salary. For one who in the days of small income formed the habit of saving, it is not difficult to make a margin with the larger income. But for the man who, through all his struggling years spent all he made, finding, as he is sure to do, that with every advance in salary expenses show a tendency to increase more rapidly than the income, it is definitely harder to start saving when he is ten years out, though his income be trebled, than when he first began to support a wife. Beginning when the home game is young, husband and wife can glide into the habit of

saving. The longer they delay the start, the more surely they must create the habit only as by revolution. It is as much a matter of psychology as of money. At bottom, it is a question of the will to save. All conditions favor the will to save in the early morning of married life.

Many things in modern life make against starting the habit of saving. Keeping up appearances is one of them. The courage to be different is rare. The notion that the cost of living is so very high, and that everyone is having a hard time because of it, that therefore no one really expects to save anything and all of us ought to be thankful just to make ends meet, is responsible for a most unhealthy contentment with a situation where the monthly check barely meets the monthly bills. Conditions do arise where business men find the annual inventory showing a loss rather than a profit. There are times when frugal men are and ought to be glad if current income covers current expenses. For a man who has the habit of saving established, this is not disastrous. But with the man who does not have the habit of saving established, the case is different. The most serious thing with him is his mental attitude toward his financial situation. What threatens his financial

future is that he feels that he has a perfectly good excuse for not starting to save. Some other day for beginning the habit of saving will be more favorable. He is developing into the kind of man who is always able to give a good excuse for his failures. Being able to give a good reason why a thing is not done is just about as good to him as getting the job done. For a very good reason, in fact because it is a part of religion, becoming thrifty is like becoming a Christian—the longer beginning is delayed, the harder it is to start. One may even go much further and say that every pay day a man puts off starting to save he is doing something to make it more certain that he will never start to save.

The larger question of business success is tied up with this seemingly small matter of the habit of saving. A man who for any cause has unhappiness in his home goes to his work like a prisoner dragging a chain and ball. It is easy to put pep into work when one goes from his home to his office with the song of the lark in his heart. He cannot do that, no matter how love dwells in and rules that home, if he has reason to fear for the comfort of his family. Here are two things to be taken into the reckoning. One is the misery of insufficient means for home comforts.

The other is the mental handicap which that situation puts upon the breadwinner of the family. Both are serious. The classic advice touching this point, was given by one Wilkins Micawber: "My other piece of advice, Copperfield, you know. Annual income twenty pounds, annual expenditure nineteen six, result happiness. Annual income twenty pounds, annual expenditure twenty pounds ought and six, result misery. The blossom is blighted, the leaf is withered, the God of day goes down upon the weary scene, and—and in short you are forever floored."

Saving for future needs, for future comforts and satisfaction, is but part of thrift. Every home ought to have a Lord's treasury. Like a beautiful street with park space on either side, every income ought to have two margins. One of these should be for Kindgom calls, the other for family accumulations. "Give a tenth and save a tenth" is a good slogan for the minimum of thrift. As income increases, these margins may be broadened. But no man and woman whom God has joined together for the adventure of life ought to be satisfied with any domestic program that will leave them with less than a ten per cent margin of saving on each side of their expense account. Let them be well assured

that faithful, proportionate, systematic giving to God makes a very great contribution to home happiness. And the time to begin that is at the first week end of their new home life.

This Lord's treasury is necessary as a preventive of an evil that lurks in the wake of the virtue of saving. Every virtue has its corresponding vice, and the vice corresponding to the virtue of saving is the inordinate love of money. He who has learned to save has learned but half the value of thrift, the half, too, that if cultivated by itself will blight rather than bless the home. The love of money may take different directions of hurtful effect. It may become miserliness, hoarding and gloating over gold for its own sake, with snarling and grudging at every call. The miser, though he have millions, cannot create the home God meant. Or the love of money may take the direction of self-indulgence, of excessive satisfaction in luxury, of uttermost selfishness in life. It may develop shrewdness and success, it may accumulate a fortune, it may provide for its own, but, if uninterested in the larger service of which great wealth is capable, it will bring more care than comfort.

If one cared only for comfort, it might be a good prayer to ask for neither riches nor poverty.

But if one cares for the comfort that is in service, he will not shrink from the responsibility of riches, but will make all the money he honestly can. He will not love it for its own sake, neither will he cling to it in a spirit of self-indulgence; rather he will command his soul to care for it as the steward of God, and will joyfully scatter it as he has opportunity to do good with it. This learning to use money for God is one of the first lessons to be studied in the school of domestic science that is started when a man and a woman become husband and wife.

The other values of promptly initiated systematic giving must not be overlooked. For one thing, honoring God in this way begets a sense of the presence of God in the home which is invaluable as a means of home happiness. For another thing, it develops the gift of management. It calls for planning, for considering comparative needs and urgencies, for thoughtful, wise distribution. Also it keeps one intelligent as to his financial situation. He is not drifting financially when he is giving proportionately. That is one reason why tithers ordinarily prosper. The habit of scrutinizing details for systematic giving develops mental qualities that make for efficiency in other responsibilities.

It is a serious mistake to think that proportionate giving should be delayed until a larger income is being received. What is involved in it is so interwoven with the whole of life's good, and so directly connected with every stage in home-building, that it ought to be one of the first principles adopted in the starting of a new home. Along with its other advantages, it greatly increases the joy. There is a blessing in the comradeship of planning gifts in Christ's name. Paul's advice is most excellent for all, but especially for newly weds: "Remember the words of the Lord Jesus, that he himself said, It is more blessed to give than to receive."

There is a curious inconsistency in the conduct of a great many people who have convinced themselves that they cannot afford to be proportionate givers, that they even cannot afford to save regularly a part of each month's income. Most of them buy many things on the installment plan, quite oblivious of the fact that they are thus rigorously proportionate givers—to the merchant of whom they bought. They are assured that the goods are sold to them on a cash basis, that it is only to get their trade that the concession of monthly payments is made to them. But the merchant's side of the transac-

tion must be considered. He must have interest on the money tied up in the goods sold on the installment plan. Moreover, occasionally a purchaser fails to pay out. Some losses are inevitable. The merchant must protect himself against these. In other words, the buyer on the installment plan must ordinarily pay enough extra to give the merchant a fair interest on the money tied up in the goods sold on that plan, in addition to that protection against some inevitable losses. Taken as a whole the business must pay the merchant a reasonable profit.

Occasionally the installment plan renders a real service, but, taken by and large, it is admirably adapted to keep the noses of the unthrifty on the grindstone. The advantages of "pay as you go" are preëminent for people marrying on a small income. A young minister and his wife, beginning life as home missionaries, determined to do without what they could not pay for when they got it. It meant at times considerable pinching, and once when payments due were delayed, it meant nothing in the house to eat. But even then they determined that they would make it a rule to give a tenth and save a tenth. So far as giving was concerned, the rule was never even suspended. They kept exact account of every penny

received and spent. Every time a cent took its sad departure from the lonely little company in the parsonage purse, it was given honorable mention in the financial history of the house. They found it easier to play the installment game with themselves. Instead of buying furniture at so much per month, they placed so much per month in the savings account. And when they bought, they paid cash. It was just as easy to let the monthly installments accumulate money for them as for the merchant, and when they went to buy they were just as well pleasing to the merchant, for they came with cash in hand.

It is altogether a misconception that the game of saving is more fascinating when playing with a big surplus in income than when struggling to make a margin with a small income. Rather the greater fascination is in the close game. It is little fun to watch a one-sided game of ball, and less to be in it. Saving loses its zest when the bases do not have to be watched to win out. When the young minister mentioned in the last paragraph was about to get married, he advised the Home Board of his intentions, and ventured to suggest that as a married man he ought to have his $700 salary increased to $800. To this the Board promptly agreed. But when the

young man found how a dollar divided is happiness doubled, and how in the market of life's highest good the purchasing power of a dollar is increased when its expenditure is planned by a pair, he rather felt that he had made a mistake. It seemed as if he could well have afforded to ask for a reduction rather than an increase of salary! It is devoutly to be wished that young people of to-day could get out of their minds the notion that a large income is necessary to the beginnings of home life, and also the notion that, having begun married life on a small income, their happiness depends on their living like people who have more money.

It is to be kept in mind that the spirit developed in the first stages of home-making is altogether likely to be the spirit to the end. That fact gives the highest value to the things that happen in the first years of married life. By and by, please God, there will be others, given of God to live in that home. When they are born there, much of their future will depend on the atmosphere of the home into which they are born. And so, when in the first period of married life husband and wife are cultivating thrift, practicing economy and self-denial, watching their savings, studying how to make their giving

count most for the Kingdom, and through such study developing the bond between them and Christ, they are giving character to the home in which their children are to be born and reared. As David said that God in his goodness had spoken of his house "for a great while to come," so they are doing for their house.

But there is something yet more important in this long look ahead, tending to the kind of home that children have a right to be born in. That is the atmosphere of prayer. When wishing happiness to a bride and groom, be concrete. Put definite things in the wish. Desire for them that when they reach the new home to which they have been looking forward, and cross its threshold, they may feel a Presence there, unseen but real, as if God himself were giving his benediction to their union. Desire that they may build an altar there, the fires of which shall never go out, in whose light and warmth and cheer all the sorrows of life shall be softened and all its joys hallowed. There is no holier, more tender, more blessed moment in the life of a man and woman, than when, as husband and wife, they kneel together for their first prayer in their own dear home.

CHAPTER IV

UNTO THEM A CHILD IS BORN

THE home is one place where it is not true that "two are company, and three are a crowd." The coming of a child strengthens, exalts, sweetens the love between husband and wife. God have mercy on the pair who would consider a child an intruder upon their happiness! It is not given to every wife to be a mother. Now and then it happens that a woman's health will not permit the hazard of motherhood, and far be it from anyone to sit in judgment upon any husband and wife, saying, "These are sinners, because they are childless." But if any are willfully childless, choosing to have it so, to escape the pain and trouble and interference with their own pleasures, they commit a great sin. An old saint, confronting a man who rather boastfully paraded the fact that there were no children in his home and pridefully declared that he meant to see to it that none came, said quietly, "My friend, if I could bring myself to think that way and act that way, I should be afraid to meet God."

It is of no little significance that the Bible

takes pains to record that childless women considered their lot a calamity, and that when unexpected promise of motherhood came, the assurance was hailed as signalizing the special favor of their God. With joy and pride, they declared, "God hath taken away my reproach." It is interesting to note Luke's comment upon the conduct of Elisabeth after she and Zacharias had received the promise of a son. The beloved physician writes that she "hid herself five months, saying, Thus hath the Lord done unto me in the days wherein he looked upon me, to take away my reproach among men." If she hid herself five months, and then came out of hiding, to be seen of her neighbors, it was because she knew that they would from this time forth know that God had taken away her reproach. It is not a matter for fear of idle gossip, as though a woman, having such a hope from God, should shrink from publicity. Rather the nobly feminine feeling is one of exaltation, of deep, quiet joy in the wonderful event to which she is looking forward.

Consider the two nativities marking respectively the coming of the first-born in the two creations of humanity. One is the babe outside of Eden. The other is the Babe of Bethlehem.

For the first there was no room in man's earthly paradise. For the other there was no room in the inn. What firmaments of distance between Eve, the mother of Cain, and Mary, the mother of Jesus, and what infinities of space between those two children, conceived as fulfillments of God's promise and purpose. But is it sure that Mary was any more thrilled with awe and exultation than Eve? Eve had her magnificat, as well as the mother of our Lord. She felt the burden of sin, felt it heavy upon her heart which awhile ago had not known its weight. Like the Virgin she was dreaming of a deliverer. A child had been promised her. It had been said of her seed that he would bruise the head of the destroyer of their Edenic innocence. And as she held in her glad arms the first-born of humanity, she sang for joy, "I have gotten a man with the help of Jehovah."

And so she had. Let her rejoice in her child while she can. Let none intimate that there is here no beginning of happiness that is of heaven, no heart-opening experience of fellowship between God and his human image. Do not say that the child is not of God. Cain will be a murderer, the slayer of his own brother. He will be a fugitive and a vagabond. He will prove

a bitter disappointment to his parents, and in their disappointment they will taste of the sharper sorrow of sin. In their first-born they will learn how sin alienates and builds barriers and covers the sky with clouds and breaks up the joy fellowship of love. Were they mistaken then, in thinking that they had, in the coming of Cain, "gotten a man with the help of Jehovah"? In part, yes. In part, no. They were mistaken in so far as they thought that this was the whole meaning of the promise that in their seed should be accomplished the redemption of their souls. They were right, emphatically right, in reckoning this child to be from God.

The mystery of childbirth with its spiritual spell was upon them no less than upon the little group around the holy Child in the manger at Bethlehem. Just as there were marvel and solemn suggestiveness of the hidden authorship of God in human life at the miraculous birth of Jesus, so to Adam and Eve there were mystery and awe and the solemn pledge of God's nearness in the natural birth of the first-born child of man. Not yet, not for long ages yet, would come to the full flower the promise made to the mother of us all, the perfection of that mystery of life born of a woman, to go against the mighty

power of human sin with the ocean tides of divine strength. But, however faint and flickering that light was, it was a foregleam of the true light, a real bit of "the light which lighteth every man, coming into the world." With the coming of that first child into the first human home was a real coming of the Lord. It was God who taught Eve's heart to say, "I have gotten a man with the help of Jehovah." And in our day as in that day, in every home where a child is born, along with the coming of the child we may, and ought to, expect a coming of God.

Strangely, very strangely again, does God make the paternal longing for a child the channel of his progressive self-manifestation to his friend Abraham. He blends here with very wonderful tenderness the promise of a child with the proffer of himself, so that side by side with the expectation of a son there should lie in the mind of Abraham an expectation of God. In the sweet thought about a child which even in their old age should be to him and the wife of his youth there was mingled the assurance of the manifestation of God's presence. Two things God said to Abraham on a great occasion in his life, and in the midst of a horror of great darkness. They were

essentially the same things said to the shepherds in the night of the birth of Jesus. One was, "Fear not." The other was, "Unto you a child." Two bright stars shone in that midnight darkness of Abraham's sky, and shone side by side, stars of hope. One was the sure hope of a child. The other was the sure hope of God. The expectation of a coveted child was inseparable in the mind of the friend of God from the expectation of God himself. For God, in effect, had said unto him, "Fear not, Abram, thine own child shall be thine heir," "Fear not, Abram, I am thy shield, and thy exceeding great reward."

Having a child in the home is one of the surest ways of knowing God in the home. Always fascinating is the face of the child. The picture of the boy Jesus talking with the teachers at the Temple has as one of its most suggestive features the peculiarly interested and kindly expression on the faces of the men immediately in front of Jesus, whose own expression is thus the more reflected in theirs. The effect, the sunlight effect, of the boy face upon those man faces is possibly the most arresting thing in the picture.

When Jesus would go into the deep places of the hearts of his disciples with his most search-

ing message concerning the Kingdom, he placed a little child in the midst of them, and while their eyes were focused on the child's face, he gave them such an understanding of the truth as never before had gone through their ears into their hearts. After all, there is nothing like the companionship of a child to warm the heart and open the susceptibilities of the spirit. A little group of ministers who were touring Palestine on a quiet afternoon planned a walk of several miles up the shore of Galilee from Tiberias to the rocky elevation back of Magdala, that they might have the particularly fine view of the lake to be obtained there. For their guide and companion they had a little Syrian boy about twelve years of age. He was such a boy as Jesus might have been, when he went at that age to the Temple, and straightway that winsome lad found his place in the hearts of the men. Who could ever forget his singing, "Jesus loves me, this I know, for the Bible tells me so." For those ministers that afternoon there was a new tenderness in the saying, "A little child shall lead them."

It is a part of the mission of child life in the home to call forth and develop the tenderness that is inherent in human hearts. That call

comes with the first expectancy of a child. Some husbands do not know until they learn it by experience, often not until they have ignorantly caused a good deal of heartache, that during the periods preceding childbirth a woman must go through many and various ordeals. Day by day her burdens increase. She is subject to peculiar trials both in body and in mind. It is a period in which it is very easy for husband and wife to grow apart, in which misunderstandings readily arise, in which faultfindings may break out. On the other hand, it is a time for proving the magnanimity of conjugal love, for binding companion hearts into a closer union, for apprehension of the finer things in married life.

Now is the chance for a husband to love his wife as Christ loved the Church and gave himself for it. She is risking her life that she may give birth to a child that will bear his name. While she has her days of joy, she also has her nights of terror. Women do die in childbearing, and as her time approaches, it is not strange that she should have to fight off fears. It is a part of the price she must pay for glorious motherhood. Now is the time, if ever, when the husband is called upon to show himself a true lover, a lover who loves his wife and cares

for her as tenderly as he cares for his own flesh. What husband can ever forget the time when his young wife told him of the things she would want him to do for her, in case she should not survive her ordeal? One by one she went over her peculiar treasures, and gave directions what to do with this, to whom to give that, and all as if it had been borne in upon her soul that prudence required that this conditional disposition of her cherished possessions should be made. And then the day came, with its anxious hours of waiting, with the pitiful pains by which every child comes into the world, until at last a new and unfamiliar cry is heard, the cry that tells the old, old story that a man child is born into the world. To every man, if he be the husband God meant, the mother of his child will have for him the beauty of a Madonna.

And what has come to pass? Much every way. Where there had been two, there are now three, or possibly four. Blessed be twins! Where there had been love, there is now more and more tender love. And this increase in love is not merely because there are more people to love and be loved. It is also richly true that there is more love between husband and wife. The little child which God gave them to love has mys-

teriously refined and increased their love for each other. Also, if they are rightly exercised by the whole experience, they find themselves possessed of a more radiant love for God. He has been so good to them. He has gone with them through the valley and the shadow. He has turned fear into joy. He has given them a new responsibility wherein dwells the need of him, and as touching that need he has given exceeding great and precious promises. The entire situation is set for a closer communion with God. The very name of God takes on a new and deeper sanctity. And this feeling toward the name of God will grow with all the growing years of the child.

By as much as the father feels the upward, trusting, admiring look of his child toward him, his thought in turn will be directed reverently and adoringly toward God. In the early period of a child's life, the attitude toward true parents is all but worshipful, and no man with a good heart can fail to be moved with a desire to be worthy of that esteem, or fail to derive from it a new appreciation of the God above him.

A man of quick temper, which when loosed from its leash sometimes vented itself in a tirade of profanity, was one day pouring out the vials of his unrestrained wrath upon the hapless

head of an employee. Suddenly he turned and saw his little girl looking at him in wide-eyed horror. Then covering her face with her hands, she turned and ran away from him. It was now his turn to be hurt with horror. How could he ever win back the respect of his idolized child? That was the last of profanity for him.

Among our many incentives to be good, is not the desire to be esteemed by our children one of the strongest? Every man, indeed, likes to be thought well of by his neighbors, and it hurts anyone to think that others think ill of him. But nothing of this kind has such a sting in it as the feeling that those for whose good opinion we care most are the very ones who despise us most. To be worthy of the respect of his own children is one of the finest aspirations any man can have. When one has this to live for, he has something in his surroundings that will put stiffening into his purpose to live worthily. It is a noble desire in the heart of any man to live and labor so as to be approved in the sight of the God above him, a workman who has no need to be ashamed. Likewise, it is a noble desire in the heart of any man to walk and talk, so as to be adored in the sight of the child below him, a father who has no need to be ashamed.

In the emotions of a sound mind these two relationships work together to produce Christian character. It is really and deeply true that the more one is interested in a little child, the more he is concerned to know God and do his will. Conversely, it is really and deeply true that the more one is interested in God, the more he is concerned to have fellowship with child life. What comprehending appreciation of God and what depth of delight in child life lay back of the Master's protective saying, "Suffer the little children to come unto me; forbid them not: for to such belongeth the kingdom of God." The farther one gets into the Kingdom of God, the better he must know and the more he must delight in God. The more real anyone's fellowship with child life is, the more congenial to him are thoughts of the Kingdom. Concern for what is best for one's child moves hand in hand with all that whereby parental spiritual life is enriched.

It takes one with the experience of a Christian father or mother to appreciate the exceeding great significance of the Eighth Psalm. Only one who has learned through his own better acquaintance with the highest by means of the influence of precious child companionship can get the fine meaning of the psalmist when he sings:

"O Jehovah, our Lord,
How excellent is thy name in all the earth,
Who hast set thy glory upon the heavens!
Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings hast
thou established strength."

"Childhood, 'with no language but a cry,' is, if rightly regarded in its source, its budding possibilities, its dependence, its growth, a more potent witness to a more wondrous name than all the stars."

CHAPTER V

HOW MANY CHILDREN?

IT is much easier to name the minimum than it is to fix the maximum. How many children there ought to be in a home, even whether or not there should be any children in the home, is a question upon which no man or woman outside of the home, unless it be the family physician, has a right to assert judgment. It is primarily a question between the home builders and God.

There are certain general principles which a man and a woman bringing their lives into union for the purpose of making a home are bound to regard, in determining for themselves what the will of God for them is in the matter of having children. It ought to be well understood by us all that except the Lord build the home, "they labor in vain that build it." No home enduring in its pleasures, satisfying in its possessions, was ever yet built in defiance of the will of God. To their own Master every man and woman must stand or fall. And while outsiders have no right to sit in judgment upon them, it is for them to judge themselves, to seek and find God in all the ways of their home life. The house that is

built upon the sand of mere sentiment, or the quicksand of mere infatuation, is bound to fall. But, like the house built upon a rock, the home that is built upon the principle of hearing and doing the sayings of Jesus Christ cannot fall; though the rains descend and the floods come, and though the winds of whatever adversity blow and beat upon that home, it will not fall.

Foremost among the principles in determining what this duty is must be reckoned God's first command to the first husband and wife. They were told by their Maker to be fruitful and multiply. By so doing they would replenish and subdue the earth. There is close kinship between the first commandment to parents and the first commandment to children. In obedience thereto lies possession, with enjoyment, of the earth. The first commandment with promise is to children, namely this, that they should honor their father and mother. The promise attached to obedience is well-being, with long life, on the earth. Antecedent to that, involving essentially the same assurance, was the command to become parents. By being fruitful and multiplying their kind upon the earth, they would be able to subdue it, dominate it, use it for their own well-being. And from the days of Adam and

Eve to the day of the latest pioneers that assurance has been demonstrated. A few hardy settlers locate in the wilderness. On every hand is danger. Their homes are all but bare of comforts. Slowly, surely, their numbers increase, and by and by the very wilderness is brought under human control, and made productive in human comfort. As it was in the beginning, it is now, and ever shall be, so long as man dwells upon the earth. God said then and means now that husband and wife shall be fruitful and multiply their kind upon the earth.

The duty is not diminished, but rather emphasized by the advance of civilization. The change from sparse rural settlements to congested city populations does but increase the need that they who look to God for guidance should be fruitful and multiply their kind. The other kind keeps multiplying. If the earth is to be kept in subjection and ruled for the good of humanity, it must be accomplished by the leadership and Christian dominance of those who fear God and keep his commandments. If the birth rate in good homes decreases while the birth rate in evil homes increases, the result can only be a return to wilderness standards. The lsat state will be worse than the first for in this

new reign of animal selfishness and cruelty the forces of evil will have the advantage of all the tools of modern invention. The birth rate among the unworthy has little prospect of decrease. Much can be done by educating and Christianizing their offspring, but from motives utterly selfish they will multiply and replenish the earth with their kind. As in the beginning it was necessary for husband and wife to be fruitful and multiply and reproduce their kind, in self-defense against the dangers imperiling them on every side, so likewise in the multiplied moral dangers of modern life, the hope of preserving the earth and the good thereof for the benefit of mankind lies in its replenishment with children of men who are also children of God.

There are indeed conditions that make the rearing of a large family difficult. In the olden days, children very soon became a financial asset. With grandmothers and aunts always available, there was no need of a trained nurse, and almost as soon as the little ones could walk there were things that they could do to release the energies of older members of the family for other work. The addition of a child meant a new unit of power in the forces of the family. It is quite otherwise now. The money cost of hav-

ing a baby in the house in these days, to people without large income, is simply staggering. And as the children grow, instead of adding to the income-producing power of the family, as in former times, they become an increasing tax upon that income. Furthermore, the educational requirements, in order to an equal chance in the competitions of the modern struggle for existence and fortune, involve home saving and sacrifice through many years that children may have the proper start in life. It is not, therefore, a subject for an offhand judgment as to how many children a modern home, modest in its circumstances, ought to have.

Nevertheless, for all the difficulties, there are innumerable homes, with children enough to be described as large families, that in this our day are obtaining a good report for themselves. They pay their bills. They get along. They acquire polish by friction. They suffer humiliation, in comparison with the less pinched. They keep growing. They have compensating joys, possible only in a home alive with a lot of children. Granted, then, that it is one of life's biggest adventures to take the risk of bringing a large family of children into this modern world, it is nevertheless true that when the books of

life's deepest satisfactions are posted, the balance is to the good of the large family. Moreover, to them especially are the promises of God. "Have faith in God."

Both during courtship and after marriage three is an undesirable number. It is true, as in a former chapter we have already reminded ourselves, that three in a home are better than two. But three never yet made the best stopping place. Where there are three, there ought to be at least four. For many reasons that is true. It is easier to rear two children together than one alone. Two or more children help to raise each other. Parental life is broadened by having to deal with the unexpected in children of different dispositions. The training of a child is at the same time the spiritual education of the father and mother. One must not forget or seem to cast a slur on the truly noble Christian character found in both husband and wife in many a childless home. It is their double misfortune not to have children. It may be that some husbands and wives never want children, feel more than satisfied to be without them. But that may be doubted. Part of the time they may feel that way. It is hardly possible to feel that way always. The simple reason is that God made them so they would not

feel that way all of the time. The little girl who loves and hugs her doll can hardly grow into normal womanhood without having arms that sometimes ache for the feel of a child. It is easy to believe that every woman is born into the world with the heart of a mother throbbing in her bosom.

To live without children may be selfish. It may be self-denial. But it is always loss. The loss is of different kinds. One of the kinds is the loss of a peculiar type of pleasure, the pleasure of playing with children. There are some chambers in the hearts of men and women the key of which God places only in little hands. Except these unlock them, they remain closed to the end of life.

Another loss is that of the pride and joy that come with the character and service attainments of a son or daughter. "Greater joy have I none than this, to hear of my children walking in the truth." Compared with such exultations, what is the pitiful negative satisfaction in being free from the care and responsibility of having and rearing children!

Once again, to have no share in the task of training children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord is to be without one of the best dis-

ciplines men and women can have for their own souls. Doubtless some reader mentally observed, while perusing the sentence about the pride and joy of parents in the good work of sons and daughters, that there is an offsetting pain, which sometimes intensifies to anguish, in the sin and shame of profligate children. All that is very true. It is almost a universal belief that in every family there must be a black sheep, which is not true at all. But sometimes boys, and alas! girls, also, do go astray. Many a broken-hearted parent has known the tragic meaning of the words,

"How sharper than a serpent's tooth it is
To have a thankless child."

Nevertheless, even at the worst, it is better to have loved and lost such a child than never to have had that child to love at all.

In the very agonies over a wayward child, the parent who walks with God, and loves with God and like the Son of God goes to seek and save the lost, sees of the travail of his soul and is satisfied. Reckoning all his suffering and all his gain in godliness, he is richer for all eternity because of that experience. And then it may be, the chances are that it will be, that, scanning the distant hilltop over which the road from the far country

winds, he will see, while yet he is a great way off, the lost lad coming to his father's house again. Then there will be such joy of life, such merry-making, as is never known save in a human father's heart tuned to the music in the heart of our heavenly Father. Looking at it from any point of view, a home without lads and lassies is a home with lots of losses. But let it be remembered, and remembered tenderly, not harshly, that to some wives it is not given either to bear or mother children.

The training of the child, just as really as the discipline of parents, makes clear requirement for at least two children in the home. It is asking more than is fair of any boy or girl to withstand and triumph over the temptations to selfishness that so easily beset the path of an only child. Any child, though born one of a dozen, will have all sorts of temptations to selfishness, and we do well to remember that sometimes an only child is better reared than some in large families. When that happens, it is greatly to the credit of the parents. The point is that the path to unselfishness is rough enough at best, and ought not to be made harder for any little one by lack of another child with whom the blessings of home must be shared. Also, it must be remembered

that a child craves and has the right to other child companionship.

It happens, not infrequently, that for good and sufficient reasons a woman may not become a mother a second time, just as now and again a good wife that is of the Lord cannot bear children at all. But over against that fact is a corresponding fact, so fitted to it as to suggest that God meant them to be mated. Many children are born into the world to lose their mothers. Sometimes a babe is deserted. Sometimes the mother dies in giving her child life. Sometimes terrible misfortune overtakes parents so that they are unable to provide for and rear their children. As there are many childless homes, so there are many homeless children. Is it assuming too much to say that God meant them for each other? In many a home where husband and wife have been perfectly happy in each other and both longing for children, find that none will be born to them, they decide to get children in the way that God gets him children among men, that is, by adoption. It is rare to find such adoption a disappointment. Sometimes there is indeed disappointment. But so also many times there is disappointment in the way children turn out who were born in the home.

The risk is absolutely no greater in adopting a child than in having children by birth in the home. In either case the hope of parents is in the promise of a covenant-keeping God. Whether it be for a home where there are no children at all, or for a home having one child or more and wanting another, there are desolate little hearts in the world, needing, oh, so sorely needing, the hearts and the home of a mother and father.

It is a blessed fact that a relation by arrangement can be as tender and full of affection as a relation by blood. It is profoundly true that blood will tell, but the blood that tells most is the redeeming blood of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ. He himself said that his true kin, mother, brothers, and sisters, are those who do the will of his Father in heaven. And it is one of the blessed laws of God, wrought into our very natures, that people who live together, cultivating the same ideals, striving together to know and do the will of God become possessed by an all-controlling, all-satisfying love for each other. Under the working of that law of our natures adopted children become unspeakably precious to their parents by adoption.

It is in accordance with the same law in our natures that God gives the hearts of children to

those who become their second mothers by marriage. All honor to the good stepmother! It is sometimes the fashion to say harsh things about her. No doubt there have been unworthy stepmothers, just as there have been unworthy natural mothers. The woman who goes into a home to become mother to the children of her predecessor faces big responsibilities and opportunities. She may, and for the most part does, bring into such home a molding influence of love. From the first, the mother heart with which she was born goes out to these motherless children, and she becomes in very truth a love mother to them. And, though oftentimes it takes great tact and patience to love down initial prejudice, in the end she has her reward in the very great love in the hearts of the children for her, and she herself comes to know the deepest joys of motherhood, though she never held her own babe to her bosom.

CHAPTER VI

CHASTENED BY CHILDREN

THE moment a home has a child added to it, discipline begins. It begins first with the parents. They have matriculated in a new school, about which as yet they know little. Blessed are they if they bring to their new responsibilities the memories of a happy childhood of their own. What they learned from their fathers and mothers when they were themselves little children will be of unspeakable advantage in getting rightly started in the blessed task of rearing their own children. But as yet they know nothing as they ought to know it. The deepest things that a father and mother must know in order that they shall be a good father and mother must be learned by experience, and learned little by little. In order to become the kind of parents God meant them to be, the kind of parents God meant their children to have, they must, day by day, even night by night, in the care and control of these little ones, be steadily becoming finer souls.

And it is bound to work out that way. There is no polishing process equal to the rubbing down

by baby hands. That is one of the reasons why the female of the species is so much finer than the male. She has more contact with the child. Maternal work is never done, mother concern never relaxed. A young man, having in his voice just a little accent of pride over being now able to support himself, said to his mother, "It must be a great relief to you, mother, to have your children settled in life, and not to have any more anxiety for them." "Oh, you dear boy," she laughed, "you do not know anything about it." And then she added with wistful earnestness, "A mother's anxiety goes on as long as she and her children live." The saying about being tied to mother's apron strings is commonly quoted as if those apron strings held the child. The willful child may snip them and go far away from home. But the mother heart never knows that they are cut. They hold her to her child, however far he may go. For her apron strings are divinely elastic, and though stretched to the ends of the earth they will not break. If throughout all time and in all the world, the dearest name known to men, the name most held in honor among the brave and the strong, is "mother," there is a reason for it. She deserves it. She is crowned queen of the home because

she is queenly. She became queenly by being steadfastly a good mother. The painful process of being a good mother was to her at the same time a refining process of making her a sweet soul.

Responsibility is always arresting, and if accepted and undertaken, is purifying and ennobling. A certain young man who had lived a happy-go-lucky life, wholly indifferent about money except as his pleasures required it, earning a good salary and for the most part living beyond it, came to the end of that road of gay frivolity by falling in love with a good woman. In due time they were married. What sobered him and changed his whole attitude toward life was the thought that he must now take care of two. The idea of his being responsible for the well-being and comfort of another life stung him into a self-restraint that had never even occurred to him before. He spoke of it to his father somewhat on this wise: "Father, do you know when it came home to me that the girl who promised to marry me was trusting me to take care of her, giving up her own home, leaving its shelter and forsaking her parents and giving up their care for her in order to live with me, it almost made me afraid. I began to feel what a big thing I was

undertaking. And, as had not before even entered my mind, I felt the imperative importance of self-control in my indulgences, of earning money and saving it."

Also, there are other kinds of responsibility that sober and sanctify life. A very interesting and significant chapter in the spiritual autobiography of an earnest mother was given to her pastor: "When I was a young girl, there was a revival in our village. It came to me that I ought to become a Christian and join the Church, both on my own account and in order to influence my brother to do the same. He was inclined to be wild, and I thought that he especially needed the restraints and spiritual quickening of Church membership. Both of us did join, and it worked out as I had hoped it would. I was, I think, a real Christian. I trusted and loved Jesus Christ. I was faithful in my church duties. I read my Bible and maintained habits of prayer. My life was counted consistent. By and by, I married. God was good to me and gave me children. As they were growing, and as the feeling of responsibility for them grew on me, I became very much dissatisfied with my Christian experience, especially with my prayer life. I felt that I must have God in a way and in a measure that up to

that time I had not had him. And so it was that my mother responsibility drove me to a greater directness and simplicity and earnestness in my prayer life." What parent has not found it so?

Farther down the road the need deepens. Consider such a home as this. Healthy, robust, happy young parents; family life beautiful and joyous, innocence and sweetness abound. One day a dear child is caught telling a lie. With a great heartache, those young parents talk it over after the children are in bed. With their eyes thus rudely opened, they see not only this but other things, straws showing how the wind blows through little lives, and they feel how easy it would be for little feet to go astray. They are face to face with the certainty that children precious and pure as theirs need only to be neglected to get away from goodness and God. And then they begin to watch and pray with new earnestness. They feel their own insufficiency for this great task of rightly rearing children. But out of this awakening to character dangers ahead of their children comes, not despair, but hope, hope in God. There is a larger place in their hearts for God now. They will be better souls and therefore better parents.

These older children of God, through responsibility for their own children, are learning that it is not in their own strength but in God that their confidence lies. And after that lesson has been learned, who would surrender its gain for twice its cost? With all its fear and pain, there is nothing sweeter than this hovering in the companionship of God over the moral and spiritual growth of his children and ours. Since the outcome of heaviness of heart is a groping after God, and since the outcome of discovered weakness is a taking hold in restful hope upon the everlasting arms, there can be nothing that so purifies and satisfies the soul of a saint as duty wherein responsibility presses to the point of pain.

The chastening or refining of the spirit of man comes by a double process. One side of it is a process of chiseling, of cutting off roughness and coarseness. The other side of it is a polishing, constructive process, a bringing out of the fine grain of character.

God uses a little child to lead Christian parents through both of these processes. The mayor of an Ohio town gave a capital illustration of the first of these processes. It was at a meeting for the important patriotic task of cultivating the

sentiment for law enforcement, a duty which the prohibition amendment is bound to keep urgent for years to come. Now this mayor had been a drinking man, what he himself described as a heavy drinker. But he was always opposed to the saloon, having other ways of getting his own liquor. But the time came when besides being against the saloon he became also a total abstainer. A little child led him to chisel the habit of strong drink out of his life. One day he was in the garden among the flowers when his little girl came running out to him, exclaiming in wonder and terror: "Oh, papa, come and see. Right in front of our house is a drunk man." It was as if he had been stabbed. Suppose he had been that drunken man? That might very easily have occurred. From that day he became a total abstainer. So far did he advance to be fine.

Because they do not wish to set a bad example to their children, good and honest fathers and mothers are always putting away habits which, but for the children, they would not have considered giving up. Think of a man who was fifty years old and beyond. All his life he had been a smoker. Just before his marriage it was his intention to please his wife by giving up

what he himself called the pernicious weed. But that good intention went to the place where a great many good intentions go, and he kept on keeping company with the pernicious weed after the wedding. It was always a rarely happy home in spite of tobacco smoke. One day a stranger came to the village, announcing that he would lecture on "Phrenology." Any other subject would have done as well, for he talked almost everything but phrenology. And he said some good things. Among these was a word to the effect that a man was a born fool who would try to get his boys to give up a habit while he set the example of indulging in that habit. The man who is at the heart of this paragraph, and whose cherished memory is in the heart of its writer, was standing at the open window of the crowded town hall, both smoking and listening, as it were, bagging two treats with one smoke. Faster than the fire consumed his cigar the speaker's sentence burned its way into his heart and conscience. That was his last smoke, though he lived for thirty years afterwards. He said, "If my boys began by my example, they can quit by it." Years later, one of his sons, who had long since given up the habit, expressed his regret that when the habit

had become so much a part of his life, and had meant so much in comfort for him, it had been necessary to give it up for the sake of its influence on his boys. Swift and decisive was his answer, "It was the best thing that ever happened to me." Yes, he had cut away the habit for the sake of his sons, but the exscinded excrescence had left him a finer soul.

This is gospel truth, that while having children brings a perpetual challenge to sacrifice personal indulgences, that whole process of self-sacrifice is at the same time a process in personal culture, the noble culture of the spiritual life. It is a growth in diminishing selfishness. Every day brings this challenge, and it comes in a thousand forms. Not infrequently, the sacrifice is hard to make. But always there is this incentive, "for the sake of the children," and always there is this divinely intended good, that the self-sacrificing parent is casting off something that needed to be cast off for the beauty of his character.

All that, however, is but part of the process, and negative at that. Parenthood is meant to bring out the best that there is in the grain of character. For one thing, faithfulness, to parental responsibility sets up in the home the ideal

of service. How great that service is, how manifold, how varied, how costly, no sons or daughters know until in their turn they become parents. And while they are paying the price of their own parenthood, they learn the nature and the extent of the investment which their parents had put into their lives. But this they knew and saw while they were growing up in the home of their parents, that in their Christian father and mother was a kind of saintliness, a something that in the coming years they would idealize and think of as the beauty of the Lord upon them, imputing to them a purer excellence of character than they really possessed. The excellence was there, but mixed in with other things that were not excellent.

Let no husband resent or grudge his wife's praise of her father. Let no wife resent or grudge her husband's praise of his mother. No odious comparison is intended. It is only that distance lends enchantment to the view of the old home. And the reason memory so idealizes the character of departed fathers and mothers is that in the remembered picture are scenes of a gracious and tender service. So many things father and mother did to make life pleasant for the children. The good things to eat, the toys

to play with, the visits that were planned, the parties given, the comforting, healing words in time of trouble, the unmurmuring doing without for themselves that something might be provided for the advantage of the children—all these and countless other things like them stay in the memory, while things less lovely grow dim and disappear. But they were in the parental character, there in the making, there along with contrary qualities that would not last, or they would not be so lovingly remembered, so vividly felt by grateful children. And so it is one of the noblest ideals of the home life to be making beautiful memories for the children. And do not forget that at the same time and by the same process it is making beauty, enduring beauty, in the character of the parents.

At first childish minds will only wonder, not knowing what it means, to see father and mother getting down on their knees. The little child will be noisy and interrupt. Even when older, the child may complain and resent family prayers. Where there are several children, it is more than likely that at times there will be giggling and studied attempts on the part of one child to make another laugh when most seriousness is expected. Even worse, father may get

angry and say things in a temper which are wholly unbecoming in a man leading family worship. Nevertheless, in memory's treasured art gallery, that is a beautiful picture, a cherished picture, a picture before which one often likes to linger and from which comes inspiration to be more the kind of person God wants. And for all the impatience that sometimes breaks out in a rigid régime of religious forms in the home, the persistence of parents in keeping up those forms is doing several things. It is making a home in which God is definitely honored. It is giving bias toward God's way for a human life. It is creating an influence that to the end of life will play on the children of that home. It is laying the foundation for a respect for the memory of parents after they are dead and gone. And it is bringing out lines of beauty in character that children will remember when they have forgotten other things.

There will be occasion in a later connection to say something more about religion in the home. It is sufficient here to dwell upon its value to the character-refining procees in the experience of the parents. Such things as asking the blessing at the table, having family worship, taking time to teach children what duty is, what we are to

believe about God, how Jesus is our Saviour, and the like, will mean doing difficult things, will mean giving up often what we very much want to do, will mean, possibly, embarrassment and fear. But we are all able to do all of these things. God will help us. Our children need them. And we get a double reward! By them we confer benefit on our children, and by them we bring out and develop latent and otherwise dormant beauty and strength of character. The glory of being parents such as God meant is bought with a very great price. But it is worth the price.

CHAPTER VII

HOME HAPPINESS

FROM time immemorial it has been said, "There's no place like home." All men believe it. It was meant that way. They are terribly to blame who make of home such a place that husband or wife or child should want to get away from it. Oh, to be sure, everyone needs a change now and then. But always the best part of any vacation is coming back home. Also, temperaments and moods must be reckoned with. To get angry and flounce out of the room and slam the door is not absolute proof of total depravity. Nor is it proof that notwithstanding such giving way to temper home is not still the best place on earth. Wanderlust likewise often drives a lad far from his home. But when the fever goes down and he comes to himself, he also longs for his father's house. It takes terrible things to kill the love for home. The simple truth is that God meant home to be the happiest place in the land of the living.

In the warfare between the temptations that separate families and the forces that bind home folks together, the natural advantage is all on the

side of the union. In some strange way an attachment for the place of one's birth and childhood grows with every inch of stature and with all the opening of the mind to an appreciation of life. The hills and the valleys, the trees and the rocks, the streams and the roadways, the playgrounds and the swimming holes and the paths in the woods, all suffuse and possess and never let go of the heart of a boy or a girl, though they live to be a hundred years old. This primitive and indestructible passion for the scenes of childhood means simply that God has written deep in the constitution of human nature something that works and keeps working for the preservation of the home. God has given us a good foundation on which to build an enduring structure of home happiness.

But there are many adversaries. Good as is this law in the constitution of human nature, it does not work automatically any more than does the Eighteenth Amendment to the Constitution of the United States. When a man and a woman start a home, dreaming of happiness, they need to know that they can have happiness, that God meant them to have happiness, and that to get happiness and hold fast to it, they will have to fight for it.

Our pioneer fathers came to the wilderness and fought for their homes, fought wild beasts, fought savages, fought their own ignorance, and they won their fight. And somehow there's always a fight on. Perhaps it is the making of men to have to fight, to fight for their wives and for their children. Time was when virgin soil produced plentifully, when fruit trees bore abundantly, yielding perfect fruit with little care. But the farmer whose forbears cleared the fields finds that he also must fight if he would win. His soil becomes infected with tiny enemies. His trees are infested with scale and other foes. In very truth the modern farmer has more and meaner enemies than had those who cleared the forests and braved frontier conditions.

It is that way in the task of making the home fruitful in happiness. Old-fashioned home hardships, except among the very poor, are no longer known. Material conditions are vastly better. We have fewer discomforts, more conveniences. We have more palatable food. We are less lonely. Amusements are multiplied. But the very abundance and variety of good times make the fight for home happiness not less but more urgent. The percentage of wrecked homes seems to increase in the exact ratio of expansion and

diffusion of luxuries. It is not hard to see why. All these things tend to self-indulgence, to restlessness, to morbid desire for change, to diseased nerves, to disregard of moral values, to insatiable lust for pleasure. Vanity and envy reënforce the rebellion against home conditions. Other people have this and do that, why not we?

The difference between the fight for home happiness to-day and the fight for home happiness no longer than fifty years ago is quite like the difference between an orchardist's fight for fruit to-day and his fight for fruit before the days of San José scale and coddling moth and coöperative pests. The task is not easier. It is harder. The enemies are not fewer. They are more. The need for fighting is not less. It is greater.

But so also is the prize more worth while. We do not have poorer fruit to-day than the fathers had who had only the wilderness and the weather to fear. We have better. The old-time production was due to the advantage of a new country. The present-time production is due to science. It means a higher human control. The former days were not better days. The quality of home happiness is not coarser now than then. It may be finer. The better equipment, the larger leisure, the wider correspond-

ence with the best in life, offer more chance for joy in the higher ranges of experience than was possible under conditions where both body and mind were being perpetually exhausted in the struggle for existence. Where there was little leisure, where there was much hard work with constant weariness, where the need of struggle was forced upon all, only the coarsest enemies to home happiness had a chance to invade and destroy it. But with much leisure, and exuberance of animal spirits, and multiplied facilities for pleasure, the stage is set for domestic tragedies in all seasons.

What is needed is just higher human control. Fighting enemies of home happiness must become a science. It calls for study. It calls for purpose and plan. If there ever was a day when a happy home was a matter of luck, a piece of sheer good fortune in the mating of sweet dispositions, it is gone. The fact of enemies must be recognized and faced. The way to meet them must be studied and grasped. Once let the mind be made up on that point, and the battle is largely won. The forces that may be enlisted in the fight for home happiness are greater than the enemies that would destroy it.

"God is our refuge and strength." Our hope

is in God. Religion is the one adequate force to meet and conquer every enemy of the home, within or without. It is gladly agreed that one does often find a beautiful home life, beautiful in many ways, where there is no pretense to religion. But even there, without confessing the source of them, the people in that home practice many of the principles of our religion. The teaching here is that always, and in these days in which it is more difficult to sustain home happiness than ever before, religion is the great requirement. It is that and that alone which gives the higher human control needed to meet and overcome the innumerable pests that now prey upon the vital forces of the home.

Religion is needed for its own sake. It has been very well described as "the inspiration of God in the soul and the aspiration of the soul after God." Religion, at the heart of it, is just a man's walk with God. That walk is needed for the man's own sake and satisfaction. It is needed to regulate his relations with others, and it is that aspect of it with which we are here concerned. We often hear people say of things that they are much in earnest about that such things are "a matter of religion" with them. We hear them say, when they want to make it clear and

emphatic that what they do is done with care and thoroughness, that they "do it religiously." That is the point. Do the things that make for home happiness religiously. Then they will be done effectively.

Begin, for example, with the matter of games in the home. That is something to be looked after religiously. By that is meant much more than excluding from the home games that are inimical to religion. Some games do stifle religion. A game of chance played for money, even though it be but a penny, or for any prize, stifles religion. The voluptuous dance, with the immodestly dressed body of a woman held close to the hot-blooded body of a man, is the enemy of religion. And every game that makes it harder for God to get in and stay in the human soul should be barred from the home.

That, however, is a mere preliminary. God meant men to play, to play religiously. In the home that he would bless there ought to be a lot of games. And the parents must play, and keep up the habit of playing with the children. They must make the setting-apart time for that a matter of religion. The appointment with the children must be as sacred as the appointment with a bank president. It is not enough to provide

games. Religion requires participation in the games. Many a man lets his boy get away from him, lets barriers grow up between them, so that they have nothing in common and are constantly misunderstanding each other, the life between them being a perpetual rebellion on the one hand and on the other hand a perpetual scold, just because he did not religiously hold himself to a program of play with the lad.

Then there is the matter of confidences. Little folks impulsively look to their parents as their confidential friends. They have many questions to ask. Some of them can't be answered. No matter. Talk with them about it. Do it religiously. They have their ambitions. They have had their experience in suffering wrong. They crave sympathy. Do not be so cold or indifferent, and especially do not try to get funny. Take them seriously. No period in all the seven ages of our human life is more marked by the desire to be taken seriously than the age of childhood and youth. It is within the phases of such confidences that parents and children become chums.

Once more, and most fundamentally of all, cultivate and keep growing all the purer impulses of religion. Children are easily led to God,

are glad of whatever brings God within their lives. It is the keeping the sense of God alive in the heart that more than any other one thing perpetuates the happiness of the home. No little thing that does that is unimportant. In the long run the sense of God in the heart makes more for peace and pleasure in the home than a naturally sunshiny and sweet disposition, though blessed is the home where both abound, as both may abound in the same heart. The relation between husband and wife and the relation between parents and children and the relation of children to each other are purified and sweetened by the deepening sense of God in the heart.

This is the point of view from which to see the values of religious activities in the home. Some people are religious about every thing but their religion. They will religiously perform a business duty, religiously keep an engagement, religiously pay a debt when payment was promised, but be quite haphazard and spasmodic and generally irreligious about prayer and Bible-reading and religious conversation and the like. They carefully observe the amenities of social life, and give little heed to the graces of worship. These ought they to have done, and not to leave the other undone. The weightier matters of home

life and social life and all life that involves the art of living together concern themselves with waiting on God. Very plainly, therefore, and very earnestly, it is here urged as the chief means of promoting and keeping home happiness that everything that exalts religion ought to be zealously practiced in the home. Specifically, the blessing ought to be asked at meals; once a day at least, the whole family ought to read together from the Bible and kneel together in common prayer; both by example and complementary teaching the father and mother ought to train their children in daily habits of private Bible-reading and prayer; by example if possible, certainly by counsel, the children ought to be encouraged to go to Sunday school; by example, and if necessary by authority, the children should be educated in habits of church attendance.

And throughout the whole religious program of the home, there ought to be an atmosphere of good cheer. Sunday should be made the brightest day of the week. The children should have reason to look forward to happy Sunday afternoons. Sunday school must supplement, never supplant, home training. When the children are young, this atmosphere of delight in the day may be created simply, as by having some play-

things that are cherished and may be used only on Sunday, and by various treats of one kind and another. But always the pleasant experience may have at the heart of it a thought of God, the God who is good and kind and loving. As the children increase in stature and wisdom, there will emerge gradually under wise parental direction a growing understanding and appreciation of religion, of living to please God. And it will not seem to come as a kill-joy, as the enemy of happy hearts, but as the surest source of purest and most abiding happiness.

CHAPTER VIII

FAMILY FAITH

HOW good and how pleasant it is when the folks at home dwell together in unity of faith. No discord is so harsh as the discord of religious differences. That it as is ought to be. For it argues that no harmony is so sweet as the harmonies of religion. Religion is the most potent force in human life. If it makes for happiness it is mighty. If it makes for misery it is still mighty.

Whoever would undertake to build a home on the basis of radical religious differences must reckon on many a hard hour of trial. In the infatuation of love's young dream the possibility of a quarrel or even any unpleasantness because of a conflict in religious conviction is laughed to scorn. But the sad, sad experience of many who were wildly happy throughout the romance of courtship bears pathetic witness to the hazards they face who join hands in wedlock in defiance of deep antagonisms in their faith. Here opposites do not attract but rather repel with increasing bitterness.

The field in which these differences may work

harm is happily narrowing. Time was, and not so very long ago, when denominational prejudice even among Protestants was so sharp as to be a cause of irritation in homes where husband and wife had opposing sectarian bias. Denominational pride often, and denominational bigotry always, stifles the spirit of Christ, without whose spirit people cannot live together as they ought to live. Once upon a time there was little social interchange among denominational groups, and marrying outside of one's own Church was uncommon. But such influences as the public schools broke down these social barriers more rapidly than sectarian prejudice abated, and in consequence people belonging to different churches married while both in some measure still felt the superiority of their respective denominations. The result was that painful differences sometimes arose, and even grew so intense as now and again to force husband and wife hopelessly apart. Another very unhappy development was the breaking out of arguments and disagreeable scenes abhorrent to the children and producing in them an undying prejudice against all religion.

The multiplying occasions which in recent years have brought the denominations into closer

fellowship and coöperation have quite largely destroyed the old denominational prejudices. They seldom spoil home life. Thank God for that. Among Protestants, for the most part, marrying in another denomination is hardly different from marrying in the denomination in which one has been reared.

There remain at least two very serious obstacles to the kind of home God meant, for those who do not agree in religion. One of these is such a difference as exists between Protestant and Romanist. Nothing unkind of another person's religion will be said in these pages. Nor will anything be written reflecting on the home life of husbands and wives having such a difference. All honor to those who in spite of radical variance in religious conviction live in mutual tolerance and respect and unceasing love. After such alliance is made, it ought to be maintained and cherished, and by every friend respected, honored, and encouraged.

Nevertheless, their task is not easy, and their difficulties are great. They cannot wholeheartedly go to the same church. They cannot aggressively together seek to advance the growth and service of either church. And the inability to do that is a spiritual handicap in their per-

sonal experience, for one of the most important means of spiritual growth is earnest Christian activity through the fellowship of church life. The ordinary happening in such cases is that both retain a nominal connection with their respective churches, perhaps each in the heart more determinedly loyal to it, and accordingly in the heart also more determinedly hostile to the church of the life companion. How can two lives grow together as God meant they should when each inwardly antagonizes the deepest inward life of the other?

Occasionally, one of the two, finding it impossible to adopt the religion of the other, seeks refuge in giving up all church relation. If it is impossible to go all the way to the viewpoint of the other, it may help a little to go half of the way. But if the hurt of this course is not so obvious at first, it is the more deadly in the end, for of all things needful to nourish and keep love growing, religion is the most vital. It may be argued that one can be religious without having any church connection. Granting the possibility of that, it does not often work out that way. People who are most anxious to be religious feel most the need of Church fellowship. It is better that these two shall go in different di-

rections, and go to two churches, than that either should go to none.

Another notion for avoiding the unpleasant consequences of a radical difference in religion is that there shall be no children. It is indeed true that the coming of children makes the home problem more complex. The Romanist safeguards his end of the situation by requiring, first, that a priest shall perform the marriage ceremony and, secondly, that a pledge be given to rear the children, if any come, in the Roman Catholic Church. The first requirement, however exasperating, may be suffered. But the second is intolerable to anyone of Protestant convictions. The pledge may be given, but, with the secret understanding between the husband and wife, that there shall be no children.

While the absence of children will save the home from some unpleasant experiences, the home that deliberately plans to shut its doors against children will sooner or later know the hard way of transgressing the law of God. It is better, far better, to have children and squarely face the complexities of their spiritual training than to deny the law of God for the sake of evading those responsibilities. The difficulties of rearing children in a home where there is radical

difference in religion are obvious to the common sense of all. They are so great that they cry aloud. And what do they cry? Well, they do not cry out against children. No voice of God ever cries out against children. But what do they cry? They cry out against impulsive marriage. They are like the sign at the railroad crossing, which warns: "Stop. Look. Listen." The multiplication of automobiles has appallingly increased the road-crossing tragedies. The fast living of modern society has just as appallingly increased the tragedies of impulsive marriage.

It is likewise a mistake to overlook the happiness hazard of a Christian being unequally yoked together with an unbeliever. This character inequality is met in different degrees. An extreme form of it is when a Christian girl is willing to leave a happy home to become the wife of a rake. She may think that her happiness depends upon it. She may think herself a heroine to take any risk for love. She may think that love for her will work the reform of a reprobate. She may think that martyrdom for love is glorious, that even though in the end she may suffer, anyhow for a little while she will be rapturously happy. She may even sacrifice herself to the

feeling that it would be cruel to her lover not to stand by him and surrender all to him when everyone else is against him. How easy it is for the Devil to clothe himself with light and seem like a very angel when he whispers to a man or woman sick with supposed love!

A young woman infatuated with a young man who had won the dark reputation of being a drunkard, answered all the warnings of her friends, with the final and peremptory close of the talk, by saying, "I would rather be the wife of this man drunk than the wife of any other man sober." She had gone so far that there was no retreat. She was in the position of one with a stalled automobile on the crossing with the lightning express at hand. The moment one begins to feel the awakening of special interest in another, the time has come to take stock of that other's character. If that character does not meet a standard test, in such case it is better to have loved and lost than to love any further.

There are men and women of truly noble character who are not members of any church. Whether they are Christians or not is for them and Christ to decide. They are certainly not confessed Christians. It is on every account desirable that they should be. It does happen

that such a one is led by a Christian companion to avow faith in Christ. Scripture encouragement is given to pray and work for such a result. It is here earnestly contended that the family should be a unit in church membership. When it is not so, the Church member part of the home has an unfair burden to carry. Loneliness is always painful. Spiritual loneliness is especially so. A Christian husband or wife going alone to the Lord's table, with unutterable longing for the spiritual sympathy of the life companion, suffers as only God understands. Usually it is the husband, rarely the wife, who allows the other to suffer that loneliness. Is that fair? Is that fulfilling the spirit of the marriage vow? To think for the moment not of the highest motive, to be a confessed follower of Christ, but only of the vow to comfort, cherish, and support, how far short of that vow does one come who fails to support wife or husband in the deepest and dearest devotion of the life?

Then, if there are children in the family, consider how much harder it is to lead these to accept and confess Christ, if an honored father or mother is not a Church member. A lad who was urged by his pastor to receive Jesus as his Saviour and join the Church, replied with a quiver in his lips,

that his father had died without being a Christian, and he had no desire to go to heaven if his father were not there. It was explained to him that only God knew how it was with his dead father, and that it would be a fearful mistake for him to live as if he had no hope of meeting his father in heaven. Supposing now that that father had indeed made his peace with God, and did in very truth attain heaven through secret faith in Christ, who can measure the wrong he did to his boy by failing to leave him the legacy of remembered confession of faith in Christ? How much easier it would have been for the boy, loving his father as he did, to accept and confess Christ before men, if he had had the blessed encouragement of his father's example! And how hard, how pitifully hard, the father made taking an open stand on the side of Christ for that boy, by having lived his own life outside the Church.

There is another point here, grave because it pertains to such a large number of homes, and that is the irregularity in attendance, and sometimes prolonged neglect, of Church services by one or more members of the family. Even more burdensome than not being a Church member at all is having a companion who is a nominal member and utterly without active interest in

the church worship and work. In bygone days churches of the stricter sort disciplined for "the sin of occasional hearing." By that was meant occasional hearing of a preacher in another denomination. If discipline were enforced for the sin of occasional hearing in one's own church in these days, church officers would be kept busy dealing with careless members.

It is not with the scandal of it, nor with the hurt of such neglect upon the individual Christian life, that we are here dealing, but with the effect of it upon the family faith and life. In many matters there will be family differences of opinion. As touching most matters, that is a good thing. It sharpens wits. It develops the mind. It broadens one's thinking. But in respect to that aspect of religion which pertains to the public worship of God, and the faithful attendance upon that worship, a difference in family habits works spiritual harm. If the family attitude be that it does not make any particular difference, that it is all right for those to go who want to go to church, and equally all right for those who do not want to go to stay at home or do something else, there can be no strong religious life in that family. If it be so that some of the family very earnestly want to keep holy day and

go every Sunday regularly to the house of God, and others in the family refuse to go except when they feel like it, the house is divided against itself. The home cannot be what it ought to be, half faithful and half careless.

One of two things must happen. Either, for the sake of peace, a heartache will be silently borne by those who want to honor God in his appointed way, because of the disregard of that duty by the others, or there will be household wrangling over the question. Whichever of these two things happens, the home is getting away from what God meant it to be. There is only one way of peace and spiritual well-being in the home, and that is for the whole family to be unitedly faithful in going to the house of God. There are just three courses open to choice, and only one of them with worth in it to the family. Either the whole family by common consent may ignore God and attach no value to religion; or it may be divided, part choosing to serve God and keep his commandments and part choosing to do as they please; or the whole family by common consent can will to obey God and keep his commandments. The last alone makes for home as it ought to be, as God would have it be. And it is ordinarily better that both husband and

wife and all the children should go to the same church. In most cases when two from different churches become one in marriage, the wife should go with her husband. Sometimes it is the other way. But when possible they should go together.

The Church is the single social institution that makes for family unity. For the home, the Church is a centripetal force. All the other social forces are centrifugal. Business is a necessity, but it necessarily divides the family while business is being pushed. In a city suburb it often happens that almost the only time a father and his younger children see each other is on Sundays and holidays. Schools and colleges are invaluable. We would never think of doing without them. But they divide the family. A young man, going to college at fifteen and beginning to engage in reflective philosophy, mused while the fire of homesickness was burning in his heart, "My home will never be the same to me again." And it never was. Vastly dearer, but never the same again. For he never went back home save as a visitor in his vacations.

Social engagements are really most important. It is so easy to incase one's life in a shell. We must be sociable in self-defense. But social en-

gagements of all kinds split up the family. When a young man and a young woman from different homes plan a social event for two, to see if by any chance they can strike a common chord, if they succeed, they make altogether the sweetest music this world knows anything about. But while they are tuning up, they do not want —emphatically, they do not want—the family around! Courtship is not a family affair. Honestly and truly, there is only one social force that does engage to have the whole family around, and that is the Church of Jesus Christ. Blessed be the family pew! There all may sing the same hymns, reverently together attend to the reading and exposition of God's Word, unitedly join in the common worship of prayer, and feel their deeper fellowship, both with each other and with kindred spirits engaged in the same worship. In home-building it is of the utmost importance that the whole family shall have and hold the faith of our fathers.

CHAPTER IX

WISE UNTO SALVATION

"FATHER, I would like to meet the session and join the Church." Although Laddie spoke somewhat shyly, he spoke positively. It was evident that his mind was made up.

"Come and tell me about it, Laddie. It makes me very glad. Mother and I have been hoping and praying for such an hour as this. Let me help you make sure that you understand just what you want to do. How long have you been thinking about joining the Church? What led you to decide that you wanted to do it?"

"Oh, ever so long. But it was only after the last Communion that I told Jesus I would do it. For more than a year I have felt unhappy at Communion times, when I saw others taking the bread and the little cups, while I was passed by. It did not hurt me that I was passed by, except that I began to wonder if I was doing right not to do what the others were doing. At first I felt I was too young, for mother and you had always said to me that when I was older I could do it, too. Then I began to want to do it. And I kept feeling that Jesus wanted me to do it, and

that I would like to do it to please him. But at the last Communion I felt about it as I had never felt before. And I was sure that now I am old enough. So I made up my mind that before the next Communion I would meet the session and be received into the Church."

"Well, Laddie, I am a happy man this day. I think you are right. Perhaps I can explain to you some things that will help you to see how it happened that you felt about it the last Communion as you had never felt about it before. But, first, let me remind you that you are already a real member of the Church. You are not joining the Church next Sunday in the sense that you have never belonged to it, as if you were coming into it like a stranger, like a foreigner becomes a citizen of our country. While he is sworn in, you were born in, Although you have never come to the Lord's table, since you were a little child you have sat among those gathered about that table, and it was your right to do so. You are a birthright member of the Church. Do you see that?"

"I am not quite sure, father. I know you have always taken me to church, and I have always felt about it something like I feel about our home. I feel in our house that it is my

home. And I feel in our church that it is my church. I suppose it is because I grew up in it."

"That explains your feelings. But it does not explain your right. It is this way. God has made exceeding great and precious promises to his people, and his promises to us grown-ups are made to us in such manner as to include our children. On our part, as parents, we promise God that we will teach our children to know and obey him. On his part, as our God, he promises us that all the good he gives to us shall be for our children as well as for ourselves. In other words, our children are as much his children as our own. Where we belong, they belong. Where we go, they go. You know that when mother and I are invited for a visit to grandfather's, you children are included, for you are their children as well as ours, and they would feel very unhappy if you did not come with us. Does that help you to see that you are and always have been a birthright member of the Church to which your parents belong?"

"Yes, it does. And I suppose that is one reason why you have always taken us children to church, even to the Communion service when we had no part in that."

"Exactly. We were trying to keep our prom-

ise to bring you up to know and obey God. We wanted you to see the Communion service. We knew you would always have some thoughts about it, and be wondering what it meant, and as you grew older that you would be asking yourself why you did not take part in it, and by and by come to know, as you have now done, that you have a right to take part in it. When you were little, just as sister is now, you could not see any difference between the bread on the Communion table and the bread on our home table. You were not old enough to 'discern' the Lord's body. Now you understand that this bread on the Communion table is not like common food at all, that we do not eat it to satisfy our appetite for something to eat, but that we eat it as a sign of something else, according to the commandment Jesus gave for us. It represents to us his body, which was broken for us. In eating of this Communion bread we say, by sign language, that Jesus died for us, that we trust in his atoning death for our reconciliation to God, that Jesus is our life. And when we take the cup, we say, by sign language, that the blood of Jesus was shed for us for the remission of our sins, and that his blood cleanses us from all unrighteousness.

"Now, let me suggest to you why you felt about joining the Church after the last communion as you had never felt about it before. Remember always, that, for you, joining the Church is becoming a communicant member. You were always a birthright member. One difference between that and a communicant member is that the latter takes the bread and the cup in the Communion, as one who is only a birthright member does not do. Another and very important difference is that a communicant member tries to do right and not to do wrong on his own responsibility. When he was little, he was always being told by his parents what he ought to do and what he ought not to do. They carried the responsibility for his conduct. They will always, because of their love for him, be giving him advice. But when he becomes a communicant member of the Church, because he has taken on himself vows to obey Christ, he does not wait to be told by his parents. He feels that Christ expects him to carry the responsibility himself.

"You are now twelve years old. That was just the age Jesus was when he went up to Jerusalem with his parents. A Jewish boy of that age became a 'son of the law.' That for him

meant very much what becoming a communicant member of the Church means for you. It meant that being now a son of the law he kept the commandments on his own responsibility, and not merely because his parents told him that he must keep them. Another and very beautiful thing is that God has so made us that when one is about your age, thoughts about God become suddenly active. The religious impulse is normally awakened about this period of a boy's or girl's life. You know how your interest in games changes. When you were a baby you liked to play with a rattle. You would not like to be seen with a rattle now, would you? I see you smile; I thought not. But you do like to play ball. Well, at different periods in everyone's life new and different feelings are awakened.

"That, in part, and only in part, is why at the last Communion you felt about joining the Church as you had never felt before. God made you so that it would happen that way. That awakening does not always come to people at just the age of twelve. For some it is not until they are a little older. For some it comes when they are younger. Quite often it comes to ten-year-old boys, more often to ten-year-old girls, for in this the girls are a little ahead of the boys.

Once in a great while a child seven years old, or even younger, will have this awakening. But the twelfth year is a sort of standard age for the awakening to happen. Understand, then, and I am so glad that it is so, that when you promised Jesus after the last Communion that at the next Communion you would join the Church, you were obeying a law of God which he established in your nature. God is pleased with that.

"But God has done more for us than to put a law in our natures according to which people at about your age become suddenly and deeply thoughtful about their relations to him. By his Spirit, God gives us a new nature. Below all our thoughts, below all our feelings, by his Holy Spirit, God works such a big change in us that what we once cared little for we now love dearly and eagerly want.

"Some very striking names are given to this change. It is called a new birth, a being born from above, born of the Spirit, because having such a new nature, such a new disposition is so great a change as to be like being born again. Also, since it is accomplished by the Holy Spirit, it is called being born of the Spirit. And because the new impulses resulting from this change are good impulses and not bad impulses, impulses

from above and not impulses from below, this new birth is called being born from above. Here you come to the deepest reason for your feeling about joining the Church after last Communion as you had never felt before. That new feeling about it was from the Holy Spirit. When you promised Jesus that you would confess your faith in him at the next Communion, you were obeying the impulse breathed within you by the Holy Spirit.

"Of course you did not feel the Holy Spirit in your heart. It is not his way to speak of himself. He hides himself behind our thoughts and our feelings. He pushes Jesus forward into our thoughts and feelings, so that we think of him as we never thought of him before, and want to please him as we never felt we wanted to please him before. You do not need to bother your head about big words or deep mysteries. But you ought to know that your definite decision to accept Jesus as your Saviour and Master, and to confess him before men at the next Communion is due, in its full explanation, to the work of the Holy Spirit in your heart, and is evidence that you have been 'born anew,' 'born from above,' for 'no man can say, Jesus is Lord, but in the Holy Spirit.'"

"Thank you, father. I think I begin to understand a little better why Jesus said so much about how he would send the Holy Spirit to help us. Perhaps I ought not to feel that way, but I am a little afraid to meet the session. Please tell me what kind of questions they will ask me."

"I was going to do that, for it is very important that you should understand just what you are doing when you join the Church. The session will help you to understand that. You need not be afraid of any of these good elders. They have all been boys, and they have a great interest in young people coming into the Church. They will not ask you any questions to puzzle you or embarrass you or make you afraid. Rather, they will ask questions of a kind to help you to show your faith in Christ. There will be others joining the Church with you. One or two will be much older. There will be one boy who has had no Christian home training, no help toward Christ from his home. He is a member of one of our Sunday-school classes. And he will be most welcome. 'Whosoever will may come.' The promises to Christian parents for their children do not shut out from the Kingdom the children of those who are not Christians. Such children are discouraged by the neglect of their

parents, but they are encouraged in the house of God. The session will try to help each of you to see that every one of you is saved by faith in Jesus only. Your advantage is, not that you are better than the boys and girls from homes of parents who are not Christians, but that in a Christian home you have had a better chance to know about and love Jesus. Your salvation rests exactly upon the same ground as that of anyone else who is saved.

"When you meet the session, probably the pastor will ask the questions. It may help to prepare you, if I ask you such questions as were asked me when I joined the Church, at about your age. You may answer as you will expect to answer in the session meeting. It is understood that in your answers you are saying what you honestly and sincerely believe.

"Laddie, who is Jesus Christ?"

"Jesus Christ is God's Son and our Saviour."

"Do you take him to be your own Saviour?"

"I do."

"Why do you call him Saviour?"

"Because it is he who saves me from my sins."

"How does he save sinners?"

"By his death on the cross, and by his life in our hearts."

"How do you know that by his death and life you are saved?"

"Because the Bible tells me so."

"Do you accept the Bible as God's Word and your rule of life?"

"I do."

"What is the great Bible salvation verse?"

"John 3:16."

"How do we receive Jesus as our Saviour?"

"By believing and repenting."

"What do you understand by believing?"

"Trusting and obeying."

"And repenting?"

"Turning away from every known sin, and purposing not to do it again."

"Suppose we do sin again?"

"God will forgive us."

"How do you know?"

"The Bible says so. 'If we confess our sins, he is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.'"

"Do you believe that as truly as you would believe a promise of your earthly father?"

"I will trust it in the same way."

"Why does not being much forgiven lead to much sinning?"

"I suppose being much forgiven leads to much loving. I know that when my father and mother forgive me, it breaks me all up and makes me want to try all the harder not to disobey them. I think that it must be the same way in getting forgiveness from our heavenly Father."

"Can being good and doing good save a sinner?"

"Not according to the Bible. Its teaching is the other way around, that being saved by faith in Jesus Christ leads to being good and doing good."

"Why do you want to join the Church?"

"Because I think Jesus wishes it and has made me wish it. I want to honor him and show my love for him. I think this is one of his appointed ways of doing it."

"My dear boy, it pleases me more than I can tell you, to have you sit with us at the Lord's table and join us in this blessed memorial service. I am very happy that in your answers you show that you have given good attention to what your mother and I have tried to teach you. My heart is full of such joy and satisfaction as I think Paul must have been thinking of when he wrote to Timothy 'that from a babe thou hast known the sacred writings which are able to

make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus.'

"Never forget that the Bible is the source of our knowledge of Jesus as our Saviour, the ground of our confidence that we are saved through faith in his name. Do not depend upon your feelings, and do not be swerved from your faith by the wisdom of men. Take the sayings in the Bible for God's truth as to the way of our salvation, and keep leaning on them. Believe them just as you would believe the word of your mother. 'In keeping them there is great reward.' Your heart will be kept in perfect peace, as touching your assurance of salvation, in proportion as you trust God's Word."

CHAPTER X

NURTURE AND ADMONITION

IT IS hard to conceive of a greater religious mistake than that made by some parents who imagine that after a child has joined the Church that child's religious problem is solved. A serious part of that mistake is an exaggerated religious expectancy. A standard of Christian excellence is in some homes set up for a child Church member higher than the parents require of themselves. If an old habit of carelessness, or an old habit of bad temper, or some irritating form of selfishness should break out, about the worst thing that could happen would be a sneer from an older Christian, with such stinging words as, "You are a pretty Church member, now, aren't you?" Yet just that thing does very often happen, for, with some people, it is an ingrained conviction that when anyone joins the Church, perfection ought to be expected.

It is a stumblingblock to many older people, to think that they are not good enough to be Church members, and some foolish parents put a stumblingblock in the way of children who really love our Saviour and deeply want to con-

fess their faith in him by joining the Church, by telling those children that they will have to be a good deal better than they are yet before it will be right for them to join the Church. It is not uncommon to have parents who, though Church members, are given to outbursts of temper and such sins as backbiting, and who nevertheless feel that it is all right for them to be Church members, oppose their children's wish to join the Church on the ground that those children are not so good as Christians ought to be.

When asked if they are as good as Christians ought to be, they are frank enough to say that they are not. When it is pointed out to them, they quickly see the inconsistency of setting up for a child a requirement for Church membership which is higher than that exacted of their own lives. Also, if it is patiently pointed out to them they see, as they had not seen before, that for all of us, both adults and children, the ground on which any of us may have the right of Church membership is not our own goodness but solely our faith in Jesus Christ. The effect of a better understanding of this truth should be a quicker sympathy for the child Church member, a choking out of the impulse to nag a child Church member for shortcomings. If it is normally true

of an adult Church member that in spite of Church membership the life is marked by many shortcomings, it is no less true, and ought to be expected to be even more markedly true, of a child Church member that there will be shortcomings. Among all the forms of cruelty to children one of the meanest and most inexcusable is the sneer that would discourage the child Church member in his little lapses from Christian consistency. Following his first Communion the child should, in great sympathy and tenderness, be taught, not that his warfare is ended, but that his enlistment has just taken place in that war which shall never cease until death.

Sunday afternoon following the first Communion ought to be a time for some very precious confidences. The parents' experience may be the basis for such helpful counsel as will save the son or the daughter from some discouragements that often come but which, by proper counsel, may be escaped. But the big thing is the feeling of a new bond, a blessed spiritual seal upon the tie of natural affection.

When a child joins the Church, the parental responsibility is enlarged, not diminished. It is quite true that from this time forward the Christian boy or girl takes upon self a responsibility

for right living which had previously been largely borne by the parents. But the field of right living is now so much larger that the full coöperation of both parent and child is needed for Christian fruitfulness. It is with human life much as it is with tree life. Childhood corresponds somewhat to that stage in the nursery where the future fruit trees, whip size, are massed together. Then for both the child and for the tree comes the adolescent stage, the transplanting from the mass position to the individualized position. Just as the young withe of a tree is separated from the massed companions and given its roomy place in the orchard, so the boy or the girl coming to the consciousness of individual responsibility must have a new position accorded to him in the family life. He must have a larger freedom, must be trusted with a widening responsibility, in the sphere of self-determined conduct. But when the young tree has been transplanted to the orchard, the orchardist's care is not diminished. Its welfare is more on his heart than ever. He gives it more personal attention than ever.

The country is full of orchards that were once most promising and are now all but ruined just because proper attention was not given to the young trees after they were transplanted. For

exactly the same reason many a boy and girl Christian never grew into the fruitful followers of Christ they might have become. They did not get the right kind of personal attention when they passed from the child-group stage of family life into the personal-responsibility stage of character growth. Parents relaxed their concern for the spiritual life at the very point where it ought to have become more definite and direct. Just as the young tree, when it is given its individual roominess in the orchard, if it gets the right kind of care, will grow much more rapidly than it did when it was matted in a mass of sprouts, so a boy or a girl coming into the consciousness of personal relation to Jesus Christ, if given the right kind of spiritual nurture, will advance rapidly in Christian stature.

The young tree must be properly pruned, must have plant food in abundance, must have plenty of moisture, must have the orchardist's watchfulness against all the enemies to tree life that so abound in these days. So precisely must the young Church member have watchful attention in the matter of all that will nourish the spiritual life, and in the matter of guarding the spiritual life against all its natural enemies. As the orchardist is to the young tree, when it is given

its roomy place among the other trees, so is the parent to the child Church member, when the boy or the girl is given individual responsibility by coming to the Communion table with other Christians.

From the first there should be established the habit of frank and intimate talks on topics touching Christian life. A certain natural shyness will need to be overcome. Especially with boys in the teen age, particularly the early part of it, there will be a developing reserve, which must be respected in regard to some experiences. This, however, will not make impossible the closest intimacy between a father and son. Family worship will have a new significance, and will present a new opportunity, when the children become communicants. Every member of the family old enough to read may take a turn in reading a verse in the worship at the home altar. While the daily family worship may have to be brief, and of course in each home must be adapted to its own conditions, it may be that on Sunday evenings more time than usual can be given to this particular form of family fellowship.

In a certain large family, whose members were scattered during the week, but who, for the most part, could be together on Sunday evening, it

was the custom to read, verse about, not one but several chapters, occasionally even an entire brief book of the Bible. They had learned to find pleasure in lingering together over the Word of God. Then, before the head of the family led in prayer, opportunity was given to each member of the family to suggest persons or causes to pray about. The opportunity was used, too. Any visitor in that home on such a Sunday evening could not fail to be impressed by the unitedness, the earnestness, and the blessedness of that family worship. Not the least of the benefits was the keeping open of the channels of spiritual intimacy among the members of that household. The custom was more than interesting. It was spiritually nourishing. And it was not only giving spiritual food to the hungry soul, it was doing something else, possibly quite as important, certainly more rare. It was creating appetite for spiritual food. For a big part of the nurture problem in the Christian home is to create and develop taste for the spiritual.

Spiritual taste needs to be cultivated. It ought not to be thought strange, or a reason for staying at home and reading the Sunday paper, or staying away from church to walk through the fields and the woods, or a reason for autoing to

the country or spending Sunday in visiting instead of going to church, if one likes to do these things more than he likes to go to church. The sin and the spiritual hurt are not in having these natural tastes, but in letting them rule our lives, to the neglect of what is meant for our higher good.

All this must be carefully explained to the Christian boy and girl. They must be helped to see that one of the big things in being a Christian is to delight in the law of the Lord, not only to observe and do what God commands but also to find pleasure in so doing. Older Christians, out of their own experience, ought to be able to explain to these young disciples of Jesus that, if they will be faithful and diligent in doing the things a Christian ought to do, the result will be that little by little and more and more they will want to do them; indeed, that to do them and keep on doing them is the only way to be happy at all. Make it clear that it is nothing to be discouraged about, nothing to justify the fear that one is not a true Christian, if in the heart there is more liking for a novel than for the Bible, more pleasure in going to a party than in going to church or prayer meeting. The Bible and church and prayer meeting and kindred agencies are meant to minister to our

spiritual life, and we have to learn to want our spiritual life ministered to.

We do not have to learn to want our physical life ministered to. We do have to learn to want our spiritual life ministered to. Therein lies part of the benefit of faithful reading of the Bible, faithful church attendance, faithful fellowship in the prayer meeting. All such things tend to make spiritual food necessary to our comfort. The parent of a Christian son or daughter has no more important first task in Christian nurture than that of helping the young follower of Christ to see the importance of acquiring a taste for the spiritual, and of inspiring him to use the means for its acquisition.

Sunday table talk is of great importance. A quickened breakfast anticipation of blessing in the house of the Lord will go far toward making the day rich in Christian experience. United prayer in the morning for God's help to the minister, to those who lead in the service of praise, to those who come to the house of God with burdens, to all who would honor Jesus Christ, will not only bring blessing to the service; it will also bring spiritual quickening to all who engage in that morning prayer. Thoughts ought to be turned also to those who neglect public worship. Per-

haps a telephone call, or an offer to drop around on the way to church and pick up a friend, may induce some one to go who otherwise would have remained away. But the thought here is primarily of the value of such effort to the one who makes the effort. It brings him closer to Christ, makes him feel more within the will of Christ for his own life. In a home from which such influences go out, it is much easier for the young Church member to grow in grace and in the knowledge of Christ.

And who can measure the possibilities of the Sunday dinner? It may be one of the greatest blessings to the home, or one of the evils that blight it most. For some it is an hour of the veriest indulgence of the flesh, a time for gluttony, a time in which there is no thought of God and no talk about his Kingdom. And even for the Christian, who has been to Church, it may be a time for letting loose wild tongues in criticism, criticism of the minister, of his sermon, of his prayer, even of his clothes, and criticism of the choir, and criticism of prominent members. However unworthy all this is, the worst of it all is the atmosphere it creates. It breeds prejudice and makes it harder for any young follower of Christ in that home to become a growing Christian.

Yet this shows but half. There is another side, a brighter side. The Sunday dinner may be the best home hour of the week. It may be the least hurried, the meal to be most leisurely enjoyed. If a stranger may be brought home from church to share in the family feast, it will help the sense of having the Master in the midst. His part in the good cheer of the occasion will be reverently recognized in the blessing invoked at the beginning. Absent ones will be thought of and talked of affectionately. Plans of common interest will be discussed. What each one found helpful in the morning worship will be brought out. Things will be tactfully said to increase in the minds of the younger people their love for God's house. Some quickening suggestions from the message, it might well be, will be talked of in the direction of definite plans for carrying them out. In such a home it will come about that the young people get accustomed to thinking of going to church, not merely to spend an hour in conventional fashion, not merely to keep up a good habit, but to worship God, to quicken good will, to get spiritual refreshing and renewing and inspiration to do something worth while in the spirit of the Master and in the service of others.

If health were always good, if dispositions were

always sweet, if willingness always abounded and willfulness never intruded, some unpleasant responsibilities might be escaped. The only need would be nurture, and admonition might be dropped from the vocabulary of the home. But parents are charged to rear their children in both the nurture and the admonition of the Lord. Both must be in the Lord. Hot-tempered scolding is not admonition in the Lord. Neither is whipping a child in anger. If anyone is moved to think that the fathers worked the rod overtime, let such a one have a care lest vital discipline be neglected. Some strange fads about the moral make-up of child nature are abroad in the land. Among all the misadventures in home-making, let us pray earnestly to be delivered from the fate of having our vine and fig tree next door to a neighbor who rears his children on the theory that their wills should never be crossed.

It is a child's right to learn obedience. The heritage of self-mastery comes only that way. One learns obedience by having his will up against a higher will. Life is always bringing that challenge, and he is pitifully unprepared to meet it who in his home life has always been allowed to have his own way. One does not like to hear the saying that a child's will should be broken.

Rather a child's will needs to be taught subordination to a higher will. It is surprising how early in life pride rules the will. A four-year-old boy was told, at the end of play time, to pick up his toys and put them in their proper place. Impulsively he said that he would not do it, and then, having said it, there was just enough Scotch in him to stick to it. Back and forth for over an hour went the tug of war between him and his mother. As it turned out, that struggle was a crisis in the boy's life. Never after was there serious trouble in getting him to yield to will higher than his own. But his will was not broken. It was surrendered. It cost him a struggle to yield. He would rather have taken a dozen whippings. In fact, just before the issue was reached, he cried out, "Oh mamma, come and spank me and let's quit." But he was not whipped that time. A whipping would have been the shortest, easiest way out, but it could not have yielded the same gain in character.

When to punish, and when not to punish, when to use authority and when to trust the judgment of a son or daughter, must always be perplexing problems in the growing period of boys and girls. No one can lay down specific rules suitable in all cases. General principles must govern, and

every father and mother must apply these according to their own circumstances. Children need both guidance and government, and they need to be trusted with responsibility. Parents are often sorely tried to determine just when they ought to decide questions for their children, and when they ought to allow the children to decide for themselves.

If a boy is allowed to decide a question for himself, his decision should not be interfered with. No matter if he makes a mistake. He is learning to use his own judgment. On the other hand, if the parent deems it wise to make the decision, he should not allow himself to be argued out of it. Sometimes a parental decision may be explained so as to seem reasonable to the child. If so, well and good. If not so, still well and good. It is one of the best lessons the child ever learned, if he is taught to obey the higher will. There are some things to be frankly discussed with the child. There are other things about which it is a mistake to allow argument. A wise parent will make proper exceptions. But the responsibility belongs to the parent, and if that parent is a true friend of God he will "command his children and his household after him, that they may keep the way of Jehovah."

CHAPTER XI

FITTING FOR FORTUNE

AMONG the things which have a telling effect either for good or for ill, both upon individual character and upon social life, is the possession of property. Out of a right attitude toward the things which one is allowed to call his own may come a cluster of virtues, attractive in quality and effective for social welfare. Likewise out of a wrong attitude toward these things may come a cluster of vices, humanly degrading and socially injurious. It is one of the very important duties of home life to make this attitude the right attitude. It is part of the task of home training both to teach the laws in accordance with which prosperity normally comes and to instill the principles in accordance with which one is fit to handle possessions. How to get is a lesson worthy to be learned. How to use is a lesson that must be learned.

In the elementary phases of the subject, it is alphabetical in the truth about property that God promises prosperity to those who keep his commandments. It is fundamental to right thinking about possessions to keep God in all

one's thoughts about them. The man who embarks upon any business enterprise in disregard of God is doing wrong both by his soul and by his business. Success is of God. The laws by which success is achieved are God's laws. Success ought always to be sought in the fear of God, through continuous trust in God. That conviction should be the first article of faith in the economic creed of the home. Here, as everywhere else, it must be written, "In the beginning God."

Immediately it will be recognized that God's promise of prosperity is based upon certain clearly defined duties. These duties must be learned, lived, and taught in the home. Like all other home teaching, they are to be wrought into the precepts, into the habits, into the very fiber of character, of all in the home. That is one reason why home life is as it is. The long years of human childhood, the plastic quality of child nature, the enduring impress of truth stamped in by the power of persistent affectional association, produce just the situation in which the things that people ought to live by may be shaped into the automatic forces impelling and controlling life. Every generation is in some measure different from its predecessor. But

with all the temptation to scrap old beliefs, there will be a hallowed, keepsake sanctity clinging to beliefs bound up with what is beautiful in the memory of father and mother. For this cause and after this manner, God has given to the home the best chance of all to determine the succession of success. No man ought to be satisfied with being successful himself. He ought to seek the success of his children and children's children. This is the way: Get God into their thoughts, and God's laws into their convictions.

Some of the things that God requires of man as a condition of success are simple and obvious. While it is true that many people keep these requirements without any thought of honoring God, sometimes even in defiance of his rights over human life, and are so far successful, nevertheless it is the wisdom of life to hold fast to God's will as the ground upon which we do the things that make for success. For example, industry is one of the conditions of prosperity. If a man will not work, he has no right to eat. There is no excellence without great labor. There are people who believe that, and act upon that belief, who do not believe in God; or, if they do, they choose to work wholly for reasons of their own, and not at all because God commands

industry. They do right, in so far as they are industrious, and God who makes his sun "to rise on the evil and the good," blesses their industry, though they do not acknowledge him. What they ought to do is to work diligently, not for the mere sake of success but for the high purpose of obeying and pleasing God, and to expect success as the favor of God. The distinction is big, and possessive of bigness for human life. On its basis the child may be taught religiously the importance of work, the sacredness of work, the high meaning and motive of work.

Accordingly, it is proper and important that a child should have definite work to do. In the less advantaged long ago, that was a rule easier of working than now. There were numerous chores to be done, and in a well-ordered home every member had his definite work. Now it is necessary to provide gymnasium and stadium to insure needed exercise. One of the distinct dangers to be guarded against in a home of affluence is the snare of privileged idleness. No legacy of money can be large enough to compensate for the tragic loss to character in a child allowed to grow up with no task dependent upon his toil.

There are many things about this daily definite work required of the children in the home that are important. It should always be done. It should always be done well. Care and thoroughness and pride of achievement are important, not only in respect to this little task, but in respect to matters far more important, namely, the bearing of these habits of care and thoroughness and pride of achievement upon the whole reach of a growing man's power and undertaking. It is a great thing for any life when the joy of work is discovered. This is higher than the pleasure of play. That, indeed, is legitimate, and one of the great blessings of life. Blessed is the man who never gets too old to delight in a game. "All work and no play makes Jack a dull boy," is a true proverb. But along with it ought to go another. "All play and no work makes Jack a bonehead." God meant not only that work should condition success, but also that work in itself, for its own sake, should be part of the richness and sweetness of living. They are guilty of a cruel wrong to childhood who fail to drill the little ones in the discipline of exacted work allotted to them.

In an earlier chapter mention was made of thrift. If husband and wife start their home-

building program on that basis, their children will be born in an atmosphere of thrift. That is a happy state to be born in, far better than the lap of luxury. Most of the rich people became so by industry and thrift. It is vastly to their credit if in their days of plenty they maintain their home in such a way that their children will unconsciously grow up after the example of their parents. Every child is so far well started in life who is taught to save part of his money. Some of it he may earn. Some of it he may get by gifts. From all of it he ought to learn to save by self-denial. It is curious how these lessons learned in early life keep clinging to the habits of age. It is quite common to see men of independent fortunes do such things as going around the house turning off unnecessary lights, figuring on backs of old envelopes, and the like. Smile, if you wish, but if you want to be somebody and own something, go and do likewise, and, if you love your children, for their advantage teach them so.

The possession of property has as its chief implication the fact that there are others. The essence of possession is having a better title than that held by anyone else. Society is organized on the basis of distributed possessions, of recog-

nized titles. These titles must have their root in righteousness. If a man lays claim to a piece of property, he must have a good title to it, a better title than any rival claimant. Whatever objections theorists may urge against the doctrine of private property, it must be recognized that ownership of property tends to industry, tends to the domestic virtues, tends to worthy ambition, tends to good citizenship. It is an all-round wholesome thing that property rights should be respected. In a general way, it is laying good foundations to teach one to say, "This piece of property belongs to me, and does not belong to my neighbor," and to add to it the further saying, equally rooted in conviction, "That piece of property belongs to my neighbor and does not belong to me."

And so, following the lesson of industry and the lesson of thrift, should come the lesson of property rights, such a lesson, of course, as a child can understand. If a child is to learn to respect the rights of others, he must be given the chance to see that his rights are respected. What is his is not another's. What is another's is not his. That is simple, and it is as fundamental as it is simple. There is no difficulty in getting a child, little or big, to claim his own.

When disputed, his claim should be supported. Persuading him at times to yield what belongs to him for the pleasure of a playmate brings in another important lesson, to follow later. But here the clear principle is to make it appear that in the home the property rights of everyone, no child excepted, are to be respected.

Strange as it may seem, some parents are themselves the greatest transgressors of this principle. They will take liberties with a child's property which they would not think of taking with the property of an adult. Yet when its use is desired, the child owner should be consulted as respectfully as a grown-up owner. In rural communities, neglect to observe this rule has made many a son and daughter impatient to get away from the farm. Johnnie was overjoyed when he was told that the colt belonged to him. He could name it, could take care of it, and he had many a happy hour with it. But by and by in bitterness of heart he learned that Johnnie's colt was father's horse.

In countless little ways, children see their rights disregarded, as though right were not in the thing itself, but rather in the greater power of a grown-up to do as he pleases, simply because he has the power. It will not be strange if he

grows up with the idea of taking for his own use whatever he can seize and hold. On the other hand, to teach him that his claim to certain possessions is better than the claim of anyone else, and that in his home his rights are always recognized, and that on the same principle he must recognize the better claim of others to what they possess, is to be laying the foundations of both character and good citizenship. Moreover, it will increase his contentment in the home, will make him feel that it is worth while to work hard and save by self-denial in order to acquire possession of something he would like to have.

One of the corollaries of all this is the quickened ambition to possess property. Within that ambition is the passion to possess a home, a noble ambition and an ambition that is in itself ennobling. Here is a large family of very poor people. The little house they are able to rent is all too small, and it seems impossible with such a family in it to keep it neat and even sanitary. The father's wages are small and irregular. They are always on the edge of want and always in the midst of discomfort. Then one day a friend —this is a true story—saw a chance for them to make a start toward buying a home. The idea woke them all up. The older girls were earning

wages. The father was fired with a new ambition to fit himself for a better and more reliable job. They were all enthusiasm for all the hard work, for all the close economy, for all the self-denial, that would be needed before the home would be paid for. But the prospect of having a home which they could call their own at once transformed that whole family life.

God meant it that way. He made people that way. His promise of prosperity on the basis of keeping his commandments is addressed to people having natures that can be fired by such an ambition.

But "the best is yet to be the last . . . for which the first was made." He learns but less than half who masters all the lessons of hard work and thrift and self-denial and property rights, and wins a home of his own, lays up "much goods" for many years, and dreams of ease and merry-making for himself. He has made himself but fit to get fortune, while abiding unfit to use it. It is one of the terrible ironies of life that great possessions, however hardly and honestly earned, bring not satisfaction but rather care and anxiety and haunting discontent and weariness with life. That is to say, great possessions work out that result if sought and acquired for their own sake.

It is profoundly and forever true that a man's life does not consist in the abundance of the things which he possesses.

It has been told that Hofmann's picture of The Rich Young Ruler had this said of it by the author to a group of friends who were praising it: "This picture will never be a good seller. People who put their money in pictures will be shy of the lesson here." Every man who is making money, or anxious to make money, or needing to make money, would do well to have that picture always before him, would do well to have it in a well-lighted place in the living room of his home, that it might say to him, and keep saying to him and to his children after him, "If riches increase, set not your heart thereon." Follow that up by another saying, "They that are minded to be rich fall into a temptation and a snare," and then come with another follow up, "How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God," and then still another that not only piles up a further warning but also suggests the way to escape the danger inherent in the pursuit of money. This last is a very old proverb, but never has it carried a more timely message than in this very hour:

"There is that scattereth, and increaseth yet more;
And there is that witholdeth more than is meet, but it tendeth only to want."

There is no poverty like that of the soul that is not rich toward God, and that poverty comes by witholding more than is meet. The habit of witholding more than is meet is the ally of the spiritual enemies lurking in the longing for riches. It seems like a strange thing to say to a class of learners in the school of life, after you have taught them to work and to sacrifice and to save, that saving, unless it is watched, will tend to poverty. The first teaching about saving is that it tends to possession. The next thing about saving is that it tends to poverty. But both teachings are true. The trouble with the world to-day is in no small part due to the fact that most people have been taught only that saving tends to possession. Like any other half truth, the portion of truth that is in it makes it a snare. It is but a devil's ambush.

Here we are, then, at the peak of this chapter. One of the major lessons to be learned in the home is that of being fitted for fortune. That may be what we call good fortune, or it may be what we call bad fortune. But whichever it is,

the good of life is to found fitted for fortune when it comes and however it comes. Sometimes people used to luxury, by reverse of fortune, become suddenly poor, and they do not know how to be poor. The worst of it is not in being poor, but in not knowing how to be poor. Paul was in prison, but he knew how to be master of the situation, even in prison. He had learned in the school of Christ how to be nobly poor and how to be nobly rich. He had been initiated. He belonged to the Phi Beta Kappa of sainthood. He had learned how.

Success for everyone does not mean possessions. Prosperity may or may not mean worldly goods. God has other ways of making good his promise to his children than by weighing out his benefits in the world's scales of success. Blessed are the children born in homes where the benefits of God are not measured alone in terms of material good. Happy is that home where from first to last in all the lessons about work and thrift and rights and possessions, it is bravely taught that, when we do our best as God has commanded, whatever our ensuing fortune, God's will is sure to prevail and God's will is always good will in love.

The more earnest heed should be given to

that in the experience of what the world calls good fortune. Here is the call to the home to teach with great fidelity and earnestness the Christian message of stewardship. While the word has a much wider significance than in its relation to money, that is the aspect of it in point here.

Let the children be taught how to give as the Lord prospers them. If systematic and proportionate giving has been the home practice before the children were born, it will be all the easier to teach them this lesson as they come to years of understanding. The best approach is through the Bible. Bible sayings about giving, both in the Old Testament and in the New Testament, should be marked and memorized. From these it will be evident that God has ever taught his people to set apart a definite proportion of income to be dedicated to the Lord. It will also be evident that this proportion was never less than one tenth. Start there. Build upon that. The Christian ought to give to the Lord at least a tenth of his income. Help the children to start that way. Many reasons can be given for it. The work is greater now and needier than when the Jews gave a tenth. Proportionate giving is enjoined in the New Testa-

ment. It makes giving a joy, where otherwise it easily becomes grudging. All who practice proportionate giving find increasing delight in it. Let the children early learn that secret of happiness.

A companion lesson is that of systematic giving. By this is meant distribution of what is set apart as the Lord's portion among the different objects of need. Help the children to make a survey of these objects—Church support, Sunday-school support, Sabbath School Missions, Home Missions, Foreign Missions, and all the rest. Teach them how to make their reading increase their pleasure in giving, by learning what the different Boards are doing with the money which they give. The interest will be kept widening through taking knowledge of all worthy objects of help. What a beautiful lesson to learn, that giving to the poor is all one with giving to the Lord! And so, as the lesson keeps getting learned, the uses of what we possess come to be the most sacred aspect of possessions.

The best part of all this is that it is the cure which grace offers for the disease of loving money. It renders the devout Christian, no matter how fast he makes money, no matter how much money he makes, immune from the subtle

poison diffused in the path of riches. Money-making may not only be robbed of its spiritual dangers but glorified into a noble service of Jesus Christ and humanity. Let no one minimize the dangers, or doubt the glory. Safety, service, and satisfaction are found in a Christlike sense of stewardship.

CHAPTER XII

FINDING FELLOWSHIP

IT IS not good for men to be alone. It is not good for a child to be alone. It is not good for a Christian to be alone. One of the most revealing things Jesus ever said was in the words, "The Father . . . hath not left me alone." God does not expect anyone in the Christian struggle to be without companionship. He does expect of parents that they will see to it that their children have companions, the right kind of companions.

There are three stages in life awakening. There is first the realization of self; then there is the realization of others; and finally there is the realization of kindred spirits. All people are not alike. All people do not affect us alike. The heart has, and must have, its own law of selection. While one's duties range to the limit of human habitation and one's neighbor is the person in need anywhere in the broad earth, and while, on the other hand, one is measurably influenced for good or evil by the tides of human life coming in from the uttermost shores, yet the heart makes for itself a closer and a narrower environment, involuntarily selecting and gathering

around itself in nearest intimacy a chosen few.

It is this inner circle that is mightiest in its influence upon unfolding character. The nearer environment has most direct power in molding life. It sometimes happens in a climate generally severe and hostile to vegetation, where the land is prevailingly barren, that there will be a little dale sheltered by mountain friendship from wind and storm, open to the warmest rays of the sun, with most fertile soil, and supplied with an abundance of water, yielding its plenteous harvest. So, also, in a region noted for its salubrious climate and alluvial soil, and blessed with all conditions favorable to the earth's increase, there will be a knob of stony ground, shedding rain like the roof of a house, upon which nothing can grow. In each of these cases, one good in a broad environment of evil, the other bad in a broad environment of good, the productiveness is in direct contrast to the general conditions, and is due wholly to the influence of the narrower environment. If that be true of soils, it is much more true of souls. It is the nearest relationships, the closest intimacies, that count most.

Boys and girls are each entitled to three friends. The first is an older friend, of superior attainment and personality, one to be intensely ad-

mired and imitated, such a one as the youth would like to be at the same age. Happy the boy who has such a friend in his father. Happy the girl who has such a friend in her mother.

The next is a friend of one's own age, with kindred home life, with the same background of character-shaping influences, the same standards of right and wrong, a chum to compare notes with, chafe with under similar home restraints, stand with under gang pressure to depart from home ideals, brood with over identically alike back-number fathers, who are equally hard to manage. After a frank exchange of confidences, it is easier to take up again the heavy burden of adolescent responsibility for setting the world right.

The third friend will be younger, the little "copy cat" of the family. This has its embarrassments, but it also has its immense value in character-building. When a young man or young woman wakes up to the fact that some one is idolizing and imitating and realizes how easy it is for little feet innocent of the snares of life to be led astray, the effect is sobering. A new motive for walking carefully has thrust itself into the mind. They are wise parents who instill into the hearts of the older children a fine

sense of responsibility for influencing the younger brothers and sisters in right ways of living.

Some things we may all do well as individuals, and of course we each have individual responsibilities. But there is a wide field of endeavor in which there must be coöperation. Family coöperation is highly important in the religious undertaking. In every aspect of home life it is important, but it is supremely important in the religious aspects of home life. It is a good thing to see that importance from the point of view of the values of Christian fellowship. It is a good thing for a family to realize, and keep alive and warm in their feelings the realization that they are all loved by and all love the same Saviour, to quicken in the family circle a common enthusiasm for the same church, to support in each other all the loyalties in Christian service. What all do is easier for any one to do. If by common consent it is a family custom for everyone to go to church, it will come to be taken for granted that the family pew will be kept filled. The outward ties of Christian fellowship are thus strengthened, and by being strengthened they help to hold fast the best traditions of home life against the invasions of influences tending to lower the standards. If, further, it is es-

tablished as a family ideal that of course all will go to prayer meeting, another fellowship force is possessed. It is so much easier to do anything when one's dearest companions do and want to do the same thing. A house divided against itself cannot stand. A house united in itself does not easily fall.

But there is an inner fellowship, as well as an outward fellowship. The growing mind is always a questioning mind. Strange questions are asked by tiny tongues. Sometimes these are too deep for human answer, but one of their uses is to open and keep open the channel of confiding good will. Many things a child learns on the street that were better learned at home. The answer to some questions sure to arise may wisely by anticipation be delicately suggested, and the mind in some measure safeguarded from gross things which will inevitably come from coarse companions.

A careful parent will gently lead the unfolding mind of a child into a knowledge of things which it is important for him to know. Among matters of important knowledge will be vital things in religion. As far as possible, home talks about the ever-deepening experiences in Christian thinking and living ought to be natural, and kept

natural. They ought, therefore, to be frequent and frank. Many such things are hard to talk about. That is one reason why ability to talk about them ought to be cultivated in the fellowship of the home. A fear of being laughed down, or of being criticized, or of not being able to make others understand, often pushes back an eager desire to talk about something in Christian experience. A rightly ordered home life will make that fear impossible. An atmosphere of sympathy, of invitation, of responsiveness to diffident ventures in telling about doubts or desires, depressions or victories, temptations or visions, will bind the whole fellowship of family life in a closer union with the Lord.

Many viewpoints challenge watchfulness over children's choice of companions. It is natural and right and necessary that the young should have their own social set. The democracy of childhood is one of the most beautiful, as well as one of the most hopeful things in life. It is likewise one of the things about which parents should be most watchful. Within the set there is always a tendency to intimacies. How to guide children wisely in the formation of those intimacies is an exceedingly difficult task. But it must be done. For that reason parents must ever be

seeking "the wisdom that is from above." For that reason, also, the children should be taught to think of their own homes as the best place on earth to have good times. Their eagerness to bring their playmates there should be encouraged. When a liking for children with lower home standards is discovered, as is bound sometimes to happen, checkmate the impulsive fondness for such companions not by forbidding it but by tactfully suggesting pity for a companion's lack of the best home training, and by the further tactful suggestion that the better-trained child help the companion to overcome these defects in training. This will preserve confidence in the higher ideal, will expose the defect in the lower habit, will stimulate active influence for good, which is always the best protection against influence from evil. Besides, it leaves the child free and unopposed in his liking for his companion. In the end he will either outgrow that liking or make his companion more like himself.

By every means possible the chance should be given and kept open for the formation of intimacies with companions from homes of kindred ideals. There is hardly an angle of social relationship from which this is not seen to be big with importance. There comes an age in which the

ideas of the fellows look better than the ideas of the folks. If what the fellows say clashes with what the folks say, there may be difficult times at home. At best, these clashes are sure to come in some measure. But they can be minimized, and harm avoided, if the right kind of fellows can be found.

Of course it ought not to be expected—indeed, it would be undesirable—that all should see exactly alike on all questions. There must be room for independent thinking, for the development of loyalty to principle, for cultivation of sturdiness in standing by private conviction. It happens now and again that even in homes thoroughly Christian, amusements are allowed that, for a few in the company, reared in other Christian homes, will be taboo. It is not easy in such conditions to stand alone, and it may be still harder to keep bitterness out of the heart. Yet nothing is ever lost in worth-while friendship by standing unshaken by personal conviction, and much is gained, if, while being true to self, one is at the same time gracious to others who may, in all good conscience, look at things differently. No Christian may safely surrender or counsel surrender of convictions, in order to ease the struggle through a hard situation. There is that

stands aloof and yet increases respect. And there is that concedes conviction, but it tends to contempt.

Fortunate are the young people whose home training has formed in them the habit of discrimination, the fine power of seeing fundamentals big and incidentals little, the common-sense habit of magnifying agreement in major things with smiling superiority to differences in minor things.

It is very fortunate if the intimacies of youth do not bring the children of Christian homes under the compelling influence of companions who have little or no interest in what makes for Christian character. If a lad is taking his ideas from fellows who think it old fogy and a badge of bondage to be compelled to spend part of Sunday in church services, the resentment he nurses through the long prayer will most likely put him in a state of mind to make all the grace in the sermon ineffectual with him. Happily there are just as good fellows in the churchgoing group of youth as can be found anywhere. It is the high privilege of parents to see that the chance for intimacies in that group is open and inviting.

There will come, more quickly than parents are usually prepared for it, the time to decide about the college. It is a serious menace of the times

that parents do not decide which college. Too largely even the boys and girls do not really decide it for themselves. It is practically decided for them by other boys and girls. It is most natural for one to want to go to college with the old high-school crowd. These high-school friendships are fine, but often the leadership that starts a drift toward particular institutions has no interest whatever in the college qualities for which Christian parents ought to have the most concern. Few influences in the period of youth are so character-determining as college friendships.

The four years at college make one of life's dearest dreams. As far as possible, every boy and girl ought to have the chance to have that dream. Among all the sacrifices that parents make for their children, none is more worth-while than this. With the opportunities for self-help, and with the colleges inviting students who want to work their way through, the dream may be realized by almost anyone who has been sufficiently stimulated to desire it.

In going away from home for any cause there is always a spiritual hazard. The home atmosphere no longer surrounds. There are many contacts with men and women who hold different ideas from those under which the youth has been

reared. There comes an intellectual awakening. Questions keep stirring in the mind. New interests take attention. In the average college world, particularly, one faces suggestions, sometimes bold, sometimes covert, that the Christian faith is narrow and given up by men of intelligence. It is often true, also, that professors who thus undermine faith are strikingly attractive in the classroom, personally magnetic. In a certain college for women, a young girl from a Christian home came under the influence of a fascinating teacher who straightway won her heart. But a few years before that college was famous for its Christian influence. This teacher taught that girl that there is no life after death, that the Christian teaching of immortality is not true. Because she was personally so fascinating she was believed. Many of our colleges, with noble Christian traditions, do not to-day consider it any reflection on their educational reputation to have it said that some of their professors are openly agnostic or infidel. They are far more concerned for what they call academic freedom than for a definite Christian campus influence.

It is not strange that many young people leave home warm-hearted Christians and return from college cold and indifferent if not definitely skep-

tical. That is why it is here urged so earnestly that parents should take an active interest, a controlling interest if need be, in determining the selection of the college.

There are many points which go to make up college excellence. Certainly there must be the best in intellectual training. Certainly there must be a wise, properly guided and subordinated physical discipline. From the point of view of the Christian home, there must be the unmistakable, strong Christian influence. The advantage of the small Christian college is that it brings every student under the direct influence of men of finely trained and furnished minds which are at the same time earnestly and devotedly Christian minds.

It was said of Zechariah, the friend of sixteen-year-old King Uzziah, that his friend "had understanding in the vision of God." It is a good thing to have a friend who has understanding in the vision of business. It is a good thing to have a friend who has understanding in the vision of play. But best of all is the friend who has understanding in the vision of God. There are some men into the zone of whose life we cannot come with a proposition without having to face the question, Will it pay? There are other

men into the zone of whose lives we cannot come with our proposition without having to face the question, Will there be any fun in it? There are other men into the zone of whose lives we cannot come with our proposition without having to face that old-fashioned question, Is it right? No question that a parent has to wrestle with in thinking through life for a son or daughter is more vital than the question as to where to send children to college.

In due time another type of fellowship emerges. Romance comes smiling around the home. Sometimes it is most welcome, although at the best it portends a certain sadness in breaking up two homes to start a third home. At the worst, it may be harder to bear than death. Who can measure the disappointment and grief born of a misfit marriage for a cherished son or daughter? It is a joy of parental hearts to see their children happily married, to know that their ideals will be perpetuated in the homes of their children, to welcome the coming of grandchildren, to feel, in moving toward the bounds of life, that those who are coming after will not forget the Lord.

There can be no doubt that many marriages are entered into hastily and with ruinous consequences. On the one hand may be recog-

nized, perhaps, a growing prejudice against marriage among many young people, a preference for the liberty of the unmarried, a reluctance to assume the responsibilities of marriage. On the other hand, there is an equally marked tendency to minimize the responsibilities of marriage, to take a reckless chance, because it is felt that if a mistake is made, the tie can be readily broken, even without residence in Nevada. Both attitudes are selfishly wicked, and the second attitude is vicious as well. Marriage is honorable, a divinely ordained provision for the highest human happiness, a social necessity, and for most people a solemn duty.

There are and always have been noble men and women who for good and sufficient reasons have not married, who, though themselves not given to know the blessing of wedded life, have been unspeakable blessings to the world. There have been too many tragic disappointments, too many noble renunciations, too many brave devotions to service by lonely hearts, to admit of aught but the deepest respect for the unmarried. "The heart knoweth its own bitterness," its own secret with the Lord. These honorable exceptions, however, do but prove the rule of marriage as the duty of most.

Upon parents God has placed the responsibility for rearing children in the right kind of anticipation of it. Matchmaking, as commonly understood, is poor business. But indifference to the mating of sons and daughters is poor parenthood. But what can a parent do? Young people are thrown together in all sorts of ways and the first thing they know they are in love. Any attempt to convince a young man or young woman that the object of love is unworthy only adds fuel to the flame. For love is a flame, and all attempts to blow it out do but add to the fierceness of its burning.

All of this only increases the urgency of the responsibility. While it is true that the breaking up of an infatuation after it is formed requires extraordinary tact and wisdom and patience, very much can be done to prevent unworthy infatuation. This is a high home task. Of course, it is absurd to imagine that anyone can work out a set of rules for directing courtship, guaranteeing no mistakes. It is not even possible for parents to choose the mates fitted to make their sons and daughters happy, and they would better not try. The constitutional rights to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness, guarantee to men, and now, under the Nine-

teenth Amendment, to women also, the indisputable right to fall in love. And really the best way to get in love is to tumble in. It was that way in the beginning, always shall be, and ought to be so now.

The best thing parents can do is to prepare their youth for the right kind of tumble. There are many practical details that are important, such as watching against undesirable acquaintance and company, seeing to it that there are ample chances for the right kind of acquaintance and companionship, with full opportunity for the cultivation of the right kind of intimacies. All painstaking about such externals is important enough. But there is something far more vital. It is a taking knowledge of the fact that the involuntary choices of the heart are according to a deep-seated inner nature. The most critical thing in home precaution, as touching this matter, is to see to it, so far as faithful and wise training can see to it, that an inner nature is developed that is most likely to fall in love with what is worthy in another.

Take, for purposes of illustration, an extreme case. Suppose a daughter is reared to have great reverence for the name of God. There is only a remote chance that she would fall in love

with any man whom she knew to be given to coarse profanity. Or suppose she were reared to respect good, hard, honest work, and to have a contempt for any man having the habit of idleness and dissipation. There is a chance, but only a remote chance, that she would "fall for" that sort of scamp. Fortunately, we are so made that loathing can be excited as well as infatuation. There are other reasons for careful and patient teaching of young hearts to love the true and the good and the beautiful, and to hate the vulgar and the coarse and the selfish and the worthless. But while we are teaching them to love virtues and hate vices, we are doing something else. We are doing much to safeguard them against the follies of unworthy infatuation.

Besides this general building up of the right kind of inner life, fitted to make its own wise choice at the proper time, the bigness of what is at stake calls for very specific and careful teaching as to the nature of marriage and its responsibilities, the sacredness and high significance of love between a man and a woman. If young people have been so imbued with the best character ideals, in accordance with which what is worthy will draw them and what is unworthy will repel them, and if they have been made to realize that

marriage is for life, not to be entered into hastily or unadvisedly, but thoughtfully, reverently, and in the fear of God, the danger of mismating is small. They are all but certain to fulfill in themselves the blessings of a happy marriage.

CHAPTER XIII

TEACHING TRUSTWORTHINESS

IF the right kind of companions is an important parental concern, it is even more important to see to it that the children have the right kind of solitude. The most constant companions that people can have are their own thoughts.

It is quite impossible, as, also, it is altogether undesirable, for young people always to be under the eye and under the direction of their parents. First steps in walking need assistance. But too much assistance will retard learning how to walk. Just so, watching that becomes anxious espionage, that breathes suspicion and distrust, will hinder the growth of self-determined right conduct. The home teaching task is not only to instruct in what is right, and not only to see to it that the child does right, but, more deeply, to see to it that the child wants to do right; not only to take care that right is done while the parent is watching, but also to make sure that right will be done when the child is out of sight of father and mother. One of the biggest lessons that youth can learn is the lesson of the joy and

pride of being trusted. It is worth much to fathers and mothers to have children who can be trusted, but it is worth far more, both from the point of view of character-building and from the point of view of life achievement, to the sons and daughters if they in their own hearts know that they can be trusted.

Most of life is lived out of sight of others. Consider what a small portion of the twenty-four hours of the day is spent under the eyes of the home folks. Eight hours or more are spent in bed. Another eight hours or more are spent in school and study. Further hours are spent with playmates. Outside of mealtime and that part of chore time which is necessarily in full view of parental eyes, and the occasional moments of face-to-face interviews in the time of discipline, the portion of time in which a father or mother can have the focus on a boy or girl is relatively quite small. Also, it is to be remembered that the fathers and mothers have other problems besides children to think about, and are apt to be absent-minded even while they seem to be looking at the children. All in all, the home problem is never solved if solution depends on surveillance. The hope that sons and daughters will grow gladness in the hearts of

fathers and mothers must depend on teaching them to be trustworthy.

A certain young person was invited to join another in an escapade of sin. After all the pleasure to be gotten from it had been described and tantalizingly held forth, effort was made to get consent by setting forth the positive assurance that no one would ever know, absolutely no one would ever know. The answer was final and crushing: "I would know." Such a young man or woman does not need to be watched to be kept in the path of right. God's law is in the heart. In them the hearts of trusting parents may safely rest. Though they may be months and miles away from home, they will not abandon the standards of the home.

There comes a time in every child's life when it is a great satisfaction to go into his own rooms and shut the door, perhaps lock it. The grating of the key in the lock is about the sweetest music that has ever been heard. It sings of security. The sense of being alone and of power to stay alone is delicious. There is no one to say, "Don't," or nudge to disagreeable tasks, or ask unpleasant questions. It is possible to do what he pleases.

The situation is full of possibilities for both

good and evil. Hardly any other time is so important at this period as the time spent alone. Dominant, character-shaping tendencies are fashioned in that seclusion. Success or failure, strength or weakness of will, surrender to or victory over evil things, will wait upon the issues of that testing hour. Later in life, one must be self-reliant, and it is important that early in life the process of best self-realization should have its auspicious beginning and careful cultivation.

The right of a boy or girl to privacy in the home is a sacred right. It is a part of their education in refinement and courtesy to have them feel that their privacy is respected as much as that of an adult. One should no more open, without warning knock, the closed door of a boy or girl, than so intrude upon the privacy of a guest. Such deference to the rights of the young will help the young rightly to appraise the finer things in home relations. Also, the reflection that they are trusted behind closed doors will stimulate in them the desire to be worthy of that trust.

It is for the older, now, to fortify the younger against the subtle temptations of solitude. First impressions of sin are to the effect that acts of

sin are to be watched against, and that thoughts of sin are less serious. Many parents are very watchful against sins in conduct, rightly dreading, and making their children fear, scandal. Most people have, first and last, been kept from some sins by having that wholesome fear implanted in their hearts. There can be no doubt that such fear is wholesome, and wise parents will see to it that in the hearts of their children is implanted the fear of those sins that shame and disgrace life. But that is not enough. Sin is a much deeper and more sinister and more dangerous thing than is realized in outward shame. The sorest temptation ever encountered by man, overcome only by striving unto sweat of blood, was in the solitude of a garden, persisting even while the tempted Son of Man was agonizing in prayer. If the Master was so tempted in his solitude, how ought we to guard against, and how painstakingly ought we to teach our children to guard against, the insidious temptations of the lonely room!

In the temple made with hands the most secret place was the most holy place. So ought it to be with boys and girls, and then it will be so with them as men and women. One cannot escape his worst spiritual enemies by being

alone. Rather, all of the natural enemies of the soul are present in solitude. The Tempter is there in all his malice and shrewdness and evil purpose. The world is there, more potent in its subtle appeal, because there not in objective reality but there in the blandishments of imagination. The flesh is there, ardent and imperious in its demand to have the secret hour for the rioting of its own debasing suggestions and impulses. A double portion of the Spirit is most needed there.

Great pains should be taken in the fitting up of that private room. On the one hand, it will be made clear how much inner harm may come from having pictures conveying evil suggestions. Not only must these be kept from the wall. They should not be in the room. Whatever one would not like a pure-minded guest to see on his wall, he should not himself look at in private. Few snares are more insidious, more character-weakening, that that contained in the suggestion that one can safely do when alone what would hurt moral standing if done when others are seeing. The effects of such an idea are wide-reaching. The influence of it is toward double-dealing, toward willing to be one kind of person while appearing to be a different kind of person.

Such is the germ of the hypocrite in religion and the shark in business.

On the other hand, there should be plenty of pictures that invite and stimulate the best thinking, pictures of good men and women, of father and mother, of an honored teacher, and others whose pictured lips will seem to be giving good counsel, whose eyes will seem to be a challenge to every unworthy thought. Likewise, there should be tactful guidance in the selection of a private library for the owner of that room. It is so easy to be victimized by bad books. "Evil books poison the springs of thought much more than an evil acquaintance." Charles Lamb said that he felt more like asking grace before reading than before eating. To smuggle into a room a book which the reader would be ashamed to discuss with people of refinement is to invite vicious company into the intimacies of the inner life. The reader is hobnobbing with and under the fascinating spell of the characters in the book. Just imagine the effect if the characters should suddenly step out of the book and say aloud the things in the recorded conversations of the book. What if the pictured people on the wall could hear, and also see you listening eagerly!

But the opposite is true, also. The good company in good books will bring their readers under the spell of their personalities. Taste for worth in reading is a matter of cultivation. For the development of such taste parents should hold themselves largely responsible. It is theirs to see to it that the right books are provided, to encourage the reading of them, to suggest such as are likely to interest children and youth at the several stages of their growth, and so to guide their reading that it will be natural to them to want to possess and know the best books.

There is a particular aspect of the subject of young people's reading that is of special seriousness. That is their Sunday reading. That point is involved in the larger question of their whole spiritual development. The Lord's Day offers the supreme opportunity of the week for quickening the spiritual life. It ought to be a happy day. Making it unnaturally solemn and gloomy in the name of religion is terribly wrong. Little children ought to be made to feel that in their home Sunday is the best day of all the week. It is so in the home God meant. And a part of the joyousness, through all the growing years, should be the luxury of good reading.

About the severest commentary that could

be made on anyone's intellectual life is the confession to lack of taste for anything but the stuff served in the Sunday supplement. No doubt this has some good articles, but these are the articles skipped by the happy buyers of Sunday supplements. There is a place for cartoons and for humorous magazines, but their intrusion into sacred hours will spoil, because they will make impossible a developing taste for the real luxury of Sunday reading. There are wide ranges of right reading in line with the highest purpose and privilege of the Lord's Day leisure and relaxation. If young people want adventure, heroism, dramatic situations, abundance of humor, intense human interest, along with the deepest devotion to Jesus Christ, let them read missionary biographies. There is no better kind of Sunday-afternoon reading for accomplishing the double purpose of making the Lord's Day holy and a delight.

If youth is to prove worthy of trust, when given the fullest liberty and thrown upon its own resources, it is clear that there must be created in the youthful mind an appreciation of solitude, an understanding of the dangers to be guarded against, as also an understanding of the happy uses that may be made of it.

Of course, with all the encouragement to the right kind of reading, there will be emphasis upon Bible-reading. There is decided value in reading the Bible in privacy. There is a better chance for concentration. Most people lose much of the joy of reading the Bible from the perfunctory, mind-wandering way in which they read it. Then, again, just as in the quiet reading of any cherished book one seems to be a little closer to its author, so also in the reading of God's Word when alone in the quiet of one's own room the Christian may have a warmer realization of the bond between him and his Lord. There is further advantage in tying up that experience with one's private retreat. It helps to create an atmosphere, a room atmosphere, in which it is easier to think good thoughts and harder to yield to the suggestion of evil thoughts.

Jesus spent his solitudes in meditation and prayer. The mountain retreat whither he had gone to spend the night in prayer must have had a precious association for him. Children like to pray. Of course their Christian parents will encourage them to pray, will lead them into a deeper and more intelligent experience of prayer. Into their opening minds should go the suggestion that, like Jesus, it is good for every

follower of his to pray in secret. He told us to go into our rooms and shut the door and pray to our heavenly Father who hears in secret. It is good for a child to be taught to pray, taught to pray about everything, taught that God is interested in whatever his children are interested in, taught that his children ought to keep out of their minds, as invading enemies, whatever they are unwilling to pray about, taught that it is right to pray to God about everything that it is right for us to want. Also, it is good for a child to be taught that there are other values in prayer besides getting what we ask for, taught that the habit of prayer is good for the soul, that prayer is a means of closer acquaintance with God, a means of quickening desire to want to know God better, a means of helping to love the best things and of helping to hate the worst things, that prayer in the privacy of one's room makes that room a place where it is easier to be good and harder to be bad.

If only our boys and girls can be taught that among the many satisfactions which it is their right to have from going into their rooms and shutting the door, one of the most inviting is to be alone where their heavenly Father sees

in secret and hears in secret. That will keep the atmosphere behind the closed door pure and sweet and wholesome.

Imagine, by contrast, a man weary and worried from the day's work and problems coming home to find a serpent coiled to strike him, a vicious dog snarling and snapping at his heels, a thief behind his door with club raised to smite him. His home, instead of being the refuge he longed for, has been turned into a menace to his life. There are those who by their habits of thought make that kind of place for their souls. They no sooner enter their rooms and shut their doors than a troop of debasing thoughts rush upon and overpower them. All the memories of the room, all the suggestions that come from old habits, conspire to possess and dominate downward.

It is not so with the sons and daughters of God, used to another kind of solitude, where every picture on the wall, every book on the shelf or table, every moment of meditation, the very place of accustomed kneeling in prayer, all unite to create warmth and welcome and the sense of entering into rest.

CHAPTER XIV

HOME HEIGHTS

WHEN a child you used to be held aloft by father or mother so you could see over the heads of the crowd as the circus parade went by. The highest use of home is that it be made a perching place from which to see the pageant love of God.

Moses was invited to come to the top of the mount that he might see the glory of God as, in manifestation accommodated to his capacity, that glory went by. "And Jehovah passed by before him, and proclaimed, Jehovah, Jehovah, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abundant in lovingkindness and truth; keeping lovingkindness for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin; and that will by no means clear the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, and upon the children's children, upon the third and upon the fourth generation."

That is wondrous love which the Father has bestowed upon the home. It is love from whatever angle the stirring sentences are regarded. This is not the place for extended exposition,

but space may be taken to suggest the effect of the connective "and": "and that will by no means clear the guilty." We are apt to think that "but" would be the proper connective. Not so. It is not disjunctive, but conjunctive, not contrast, but climax of continuing kindness.

The forgiveness of sin is not the only blessedness of God's love. The greater blessedness is the destruction of sin, root and branch. Sin cannot be treated, in any program of love, as something to be passed over lightly. The love of God can tolerate no other attitude toward guilt than that of uncompromising and unalterable hostility. It will by no means clear the guilty. It must condemn and doom sin to destruction. However forgiveness is regarded and received, it must be understood that God has provided for it in such way as to carry forward a program making for righteousness, that has no room in it for any tolerance of or concession to guilt. That is the wonder of God's grace. He is just and the justifier of the ungodly. He will forgive sin unto the uttermost and, "and," he will by no means clear the guilty. The fiat of forgiveness is that sin must go. When the grace of God's forgiveness has reached its goal, there will be no more sin to forgive.

How insufferably silly and stupid, therefore, is that home attitude toward sin which maintains an easy-going tolerance of things in the lives of boys and girls which are plainly forbidden of God! Sometimes parents are selfish enough to think that they love their children too much to punish them or even blame them seriously for their faults. As if love could be comfortable in seeing blemishes grow in its object. The truth is that it is the sheerest selfishness to let go uncorrected whatever is wrong in the life of a dependent loved one. Love will by no means clear the guilty. Suffering a child to grow up in tolerated sin is not only wrong to the child; it is leaving an entail of liability to the same way of living to the next generation. For the tendency is always to pass on to our children what we learned in our own childhood homes. No home can be what it ought to be, what God meant it to be, if within its government there is lacking God's attitude toward sin. No home can be ruled by real love save only as there is a growing family horror and hatred of whatever is a grief to God.

There is in the setting of the quotation above a commonly overlooked angle of the heredity question. Immediately after Moses had wit-

nessed the procession of God's glory, the glory that is goodness, abundant in loving-kindness and truth, he fell on his face and implored God to take us for his inheritance. Rightly regarded, there is a flood of light there. For heredity depends as much upon the heir as upon the ancestry. Two men inheriting equally poor farms may become, one prosperous, the other land poor, according to their respective ways of handling their inheritances. That in the hands of an ambitious, hard-working heir will be transformed into an estate of beauty and productivity. That in the hands of a sluggish, loafing, dissipating, self-indulgent heir will go from bad to worse. Much depends on what kind of heir gets the inheritance. Moses showed us the path of hope. Let God be the heir. Let him take us and take our children for his inheritance!

It is through our fathers and mothers that we have learned, and it ought to be through us as parents that our children learn, many of the best things to know about God. When God in his Word would teach us what we are to believe about him, he uses these dear, tender home ties to tell our hearts just how he feels toward us.

He knows what life has taught us to think of

mother. And so he says that "as one whom his mother comforteth," he will comfort us. The heart idea in the word which Jesus used for Comforter in his promise of the Holy Spirit is all one with the child idea of a mother. Comforter, paraclete, means a helper called to one's side, as in an emergency, as by a cry of fear or of pain. Just like mothers, God is never far from us at any time, is always within call, "a very present help in trouble." Very early in life, the child learns that all he has to do is to squeal, and, night or day, mother is right there to comfort. God wants us to think of him as precisely the kind of helper a mother is who rushes to the child whose pitiful cry for help she has just heard.

After the same manner also he has taught us to think of him in terms of an understanding, sympathetic father.

"Like as a father pitieth his children,
So Jehovah pitieth them that fear him.
For he knoweth our frame;
He remembereth that we are dust."

Take your trouble to God. He understands. He has a father's insight into a child's mental reaction to his trouble.

A minister was trying to help a dying man get

hold of the love of the Father in heaven, as made known to us in his Son, Jesus Christ. But the man could not see it. He wanted to see it, but for all his eager effort to understand, he was baffled. Then the minister remembered how the man's father and he had been such wonderful companions, like David and Jonathan in their love for each other. During these weeks of sickness, that dear companion father had been constantly at his bedside. Could he understand his father's love for him, his father's sympathy with him, his father's sacrificing himself for him? He could understand that. The light in his face showed that he could understand that. And then he saw through his earthly father up to his heavenly Father. That is the glory of fathers and mothers—to be such fathers and mothers as will help their boys and girls to understand how God loves them.

There was a vacant lot next to the particular woman's home. The gang played much on the vacant lot. The lads often made themselves a nuisance, and, after the manner of their kind, when they saw how much of a nuisance they were, they thought out ways to be more of a nuisance. When the woman called through the window that they should cease annoying her,

they felt that they had not played in vain. They were enjoying their reward in her manifested irritation. If they made faces or said scornful words or threw things, and the woman started for the door, they were far hence when she came where they had been. The woman determined that she would get hold of one of the boys, a leader in the meanness of their mischief, and see what she would see. So she came upon the playground suddenly, and there was no time to escape. But the one she was after was not there that day. Then she asked the others for the name of the bad boy's father and mother. "Please, ma'am, he has no father and mother. They are both dead." Then all the woman's wrath melted away. She had only sympathy and tenderness for the boy who had no father and mother. No wonder he was bad. Poor boy!

The minister was talking to a member of his church who was in bad repute among the merchants. His bills were unpaid. It was the rule of the shops where he worked that bills must be paid. If the merchants complained, he would lose his job. The minister borrowed the money and lent it to the man that he might pay his debts and keep his job. But the trouble came back, and, besides, the minister lost his money.

Then the man told the minister how he came to fall a victim to drink. His father and mother had died when he was a babe, and he had never had anyone to teach him what was right. He could not remember when he had not been a neglected, do-as-you-please child. And so he started wrong and kept going wrong.

But others go wrong who have had fathers and mothers to teach them what is right. Not infrequently from the very best of homes one will go astray. Only those to whom life has introduced such a trouble can understand how hard it is for Christian parents to have one of their children go wrong.

But what are fathers and mothers for, in such case, if not to show the wayward mind the kind of God they have? Teaching a grossly sinful son or daughter about God is quite a different thing from teaching an innocent child about God. If it be a harder teaching task, it is also more illuminating as touching the character of God. We learn any lesson best when we have to teach it. To prepare a lesson to recite it is far easier than to prepare a lesson to teach it. When a father or mother has to teach the lesson of God's love to a prodigal son or daughter, new meanings of that love are apprehended by the teacher.

The stricken-hearted parent has some compensation for the sufferings endured on account of a wayward child in the loftier lessons of the surpassing love of God learned in teaching the penitent prodigal the way back to a new and deeper understanding of how God loves us in Jesus Christ.

When parents who want to be good, and try to be good, and seek to train their children after them to keep the way of the Lord, have to face the shame and humiliation of scandal, they need not think that an unheard-of thing has happened to them, or that an unbearable burden has fallen upon their backs, or that an irremediable loss has overtaken them. It happens to many of God's saints. God is with them in all that trouble, as in every other. They may have nothing to reproach themselves with, for such things do happen in spite of utmost faithfulness, although also the sense of having come short in sympathetic companionship may provoke to a deeper sympathy for the wayward one. The case is not hopeless. God will not forget his covenant. The call is for a new and greater effort to bring the wandering one back to God.

The fact is that under the most favorable

circumstances, and with no occasion for special worry, we all need to go over and over again what should be the first principles of our faith. And that is much more true now than it used to be when catechetical instruction was more common than it is to-day.

One of the snares set for the unwary by the Tempter is the idea that when sin has overtaken us we forfeit our right to a place among the people of God. Many who have fallen into scandalous sin do not come back because they are ashamed to come back, because they think that taking their place among Christians would only hurt the Church. Even among Christians who do not fall into scandalous sin, there is a neglect of close walk with God as a result of a feeling of estrangement because of something in the life which, while it does not disgrace us, does make us uncomfortable in God's presence.

They only learn the gospel who use it every day, who daily bathe their souls in the forgiving love of God, who take the sinner's place at the foot of the cross and feel anew that their sins are washed away in the blood of the Lamb. It is this assurance that the blood of Christ keeps cleansing us from all unrighteousness that enables us more and more to know God in Jesus

Christ. Accordingly, it is one of the greatest lessons as parents that we have to teach our children that they must keep coming back, that they may keep coming back. The heart of the parent must be steeped in gospel truth. There is no greater home achievement than to show a wretchedly sinful son that God loves him, and is able to save him to the uttermost. And this is the highest reach of home affection, to make of it a summit from which to see the far-ranging, forgiving, restoring love of God.

It is one of the extraordinary qualities of the pearl of parables that it succeeds in making us have a more tender feeling for the boy who left home for the far country than for the more dutiful son who stayed at home. Why is that? It is not because the prodigal was better. On the contrary, we feel that his conduct was worse. It is not because we fail to approve and appreciate the moral qualities of the elder brother. The explanation is love. We are made to feel, as Jesus meant us to feel, that the penitent prodigal saw and responded to his father's love, that this boy had come to hate the sins that had made his father mourn, that, though his sins had been as scarlet, still even for him there was no place like home. In all the

world there was no man like his father. He would arise and go to his father.

That is what home ought to do for all. On the one hand, it ought to instill a hatred and horror of sin, to create an atmosphere in which it grows easier to do good and harder to do wrong. On the other hand, the home God meant will keep alive the feeling, and continually intensify the feeling, that when we do go wrong there is forgiveness with God; that no matter how far we go wrong, God's love is following us and wanting us to come home to him.

In a moment's lull in the thunderstorm, a sharp rap was heard at the door of the manse. It was midnight, and callers were not expected. The surprise, tinged a bit with fear, was increased when the man at the door was recognized. He had rebuffed the minister at the meeting that night, and a friend had advised the minister against further speech with him about religion, explaining that the man had been in the asylum and was showing symptons of mental breakdown.

But the fear was soon turned into joy. For the man had come to uncover his sin. His home was a place of sin. The woman living with him was not his wife. They both felt

convicted of their sin, were deeply penitent, wanted to get right with God. Would God forgive them? Could such as they build a home in righteousness?

"'Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool.'"

"That describes my sin all right, but is there really forgiveness for such great sin as mine has been?"

"Our sins are forgiven not because they are little but because God is big. David committed such a sin as yours, and it was aggravated by his breaking up another man's home, yet God forgave him. Do not try to make your sin seem little. Any sin is big, and yours you have rightly regarded as a great sin. But it can be forgiven. And other sins in your life, which seem to you in comparison with this sin as hardly worth mentioning, are heinous in God's sight and must be cleansed away, just as all sin must be cleansed away.

"How can that be? What must I do to be forgiven, that I may start my home again as a man clean in God's sight?"

"Just what every sinner must do: Repent of your sins and receive Jesus Christ by faith for

your salvation. Begin by taking and trusting the gospel that he died for our sins according to the Scriptures. The thief on the cross trusted him, and was forgiven and assured of his salvation. Will you trust Jesus for your salvation just as that thief did?"

"I will. What else must I do?"

"You are not really trusting Jesus unless you repent of your sins. He does not offer to save anyone except by the sinner's giving up and forsaking every known sin. Obedience is the essence of trust. Do what he says. And he says, as touching your sins, "Go thy way . . . sin no more.' And don't forget how he says in the same breath, 'Thy faith hath saved thee.' Repentance and faith are intertwined, one and inseparable. Are you willing so to trust Jesus Christ as to turn away from every known sin, because he requires it?"

"With all my heart, I can say yes to that. And as proof of my sincerity, I will say that I came here to ask you to come and marry me to the woman with whom I have been living as her husband. So far as wrong can be made right, I will make restitution."

Next day, a license having been procured, the minister and an elder went quietly to that

home, where the penitent twain were made one in God's sight, taking upon themselves the vows of holy marriage. And they kept them. And God blessed them and gave them peace and happiness in purity. The man had found the asylum that his soul needed. What had seemed like symptoms of insanity, this time, were but the manifestations of conviction of sin.

Homes that have been reduced to the depths of sin and misery can be exalted to the heights of righteousness and love and happiness. Alas, that so many homes are ruined by little things, wretchedly named incompatibility, when God can take a home ruined by sin and upon its ruins build a palace of purity and felicity! What is needed to cure incompatibilities, to heal the hurt of sharp wounds, to harmonize diverse dispositions, to turn bitterness into sweet waters of life, is a little common sense with a lot of grace.

CHAPTER XV

WHAT HOME IS FOR

AMONG all the different motives governing entrance upon any enterprise there is always one dominant motive. This dominant motive is not by any means the same in the minds of different people engaged in the same enterprise. If a group of farmers were asked to give the reasons for their occupation, the answers would vary. Some became farmers as a matter of course. Their fathers were farmers, they grew up on a farm, and they never thought of being anything else. One might answer that he thought the country the best place to rear a family; another, that he never could be happy save where he could work out of doors; still another, that though he was city-born and reared, considerations of health forced him to out-of-door occupation.

If a group of physicians were asked to give the reason for choice of their profession, their answers would not be the same. One might say that his childhood hero was the doctor. He always wanted to be like him. Another might declare that the very nature of the profession

appealed to him; its studies were congenial, its tasks and opportunities appealing. One might even dare to say that he thought that for him it was the best chance possible to help along the Kingdom.

So it would be in the survey of all the walks of life. Motives would vary, but in every case there would be one dominant motive. Incidentally, there would be many satisfactions coming along with the sense of working toward the main goal. The man who is keeping out of doors for the sake of his health, while rejoicing in physical gains would at the same time have delight in successful crops, in the gracious companionship of nature, in the joy of doing something worth while for the world, in doing his bit to give the world its daily bread, in the consciousness of being a coworker with God. And that ought to be, may be, the dominant motive in every life. It is this motive, and ultimately this motive alone, that keeps life wholly worth living.

If there be one single satisfaction, standing out from all other home satisfactions, and above them all, it comes with the sense of having reared sons and daughters who are worth while to the world.

A part of the joy in having children is the crown of joy in seeing children well settled in life, having chosen suitable vocations, diligent in making themselves fit, earnest, and consecrated in the pursuit of calling, deserving and getting the praise of men sometimes, and always the praise of God. From the time of their birth, therefore, these little ones are to be thought of as God's little men and women, to be trained for him, to be reared with his will so much in their minds, that when it comes time to choose a vocation, the big question may be, "What does God want me to do?"

It is a noble longing in many parental hearts that their children may stand before God as Samuel was meant to stand before God. Some mothers, even before the birth of their children, have dedicated them to specific work for God. A young man, at the end of his college course, moved with a deep gratitude for the home sacrifices that had made it possible, wrote to his mother warmly pouring out his heart in appreciation of his dear home folks. In answer the mother wrote: "My dear lad, your letter means much to me. You were my first-born. In you I first felt the wonder of motherhood. When they placed you in my arms, and I gave

you my first mother kiss, I breathed a prayer, an earnest prayer for you. I asked God then that he would make you not a rich man, not a great man, but that he would make you a good man. If you become that, you will be what, most of all, I want in you." Blessed among men is he who has such a mother.

While parents may feel free to dedicate their children to specific work for God, they are not free to use pressure in that direction. All souls are God's. He alone knows for what calling a youth is best capacitated. The right of free choice in the determination of life work is sacred for all young people. Some very disastrous mistakes have been made by constraining sons or daughters into callings which God never meant them for. A certain man who is now a very successful dairyman spent some miserable years first in trying to be a good minister of the gospel, just because he knew that it had been the passionate longing of his mother to have him a preacher.

Over against that was the determined effort of a father and mother to prevent their daughter from becoming a missionary. She felt God calling her to be a missionary. Her parents did all in their power to make her refuse the call of

God. But she did not refuse. In the end her decision was vindicated. She became a useful missionary. Both urgency and limit lie in parental responsibility for the child's choice of vocation. The urgency lies in the duty to fill the young heart with such a love for God, and such a longing to know and do his will as the supreme good of life, that the one great aspiration of life will be to be and do and go and stay as God wills. The limit lies at the line of personal decision. Parents must train themselves to keep their hands off the conscience of youth as from the Ark of God. Stretching forth the hand there, however good in intention, is as the sin of Uzzah.

We used to say that the minister is called of God, and we still ought to say that. To this, however, we are rightfully coming to add the conviction that whatever the vocation, one should choose it as if called of God. We send as missionaries not only preachers and physicians and teachers but also farmers and foresters and mechanics. Mark that we send them as missionaries, and young men with taste for such vocations are hearing the missionary call, holding out willing hands, and saying, with as much of the spirit of consecration as the man called to

be a minister of the Word, "Here am I; send me." If servants of Christ may be "called" to such diverse occupations on the mission field, why should we not regard all vocations at the home base as within the callings of God? When every kind of occupation is regarded as a part of the Kingdom enterprise, to be pursued as in the service of Jesus Christ, then the lines on which Christian youth are to make decision touching the field of their life work will be more clearly drawn.

Altogether happy and helpful may be the home counsels concerning the future of the children. The more home conditions can be developed so as to make choice of life work both natural and spiritual, the nearer will the ideal be approached. By natural choice is meant free choice in accordance with taste and aptitude. By spiritual choice is meant free choice in accordance with the desire to fulfill the plan of God.

Circumstances beyond control may force decision against preference and in opposition to what is felt to be the most promising field of success and usefulness. If such turn to one's life is forced, as by the necessities of others, as by hindrances that cannot be overcome in the direction of desire, the thing to do is to thank

God and take courage. The voices that speak seem to say that it is the will of God. If so, life's larger good and greater use must lie that way. No life is endowed with the capacity to do merely one or two or even a few things. The marvel of man is that he can fit himself to do many of a multitude of things.

The ability to be successful in one thing involves the ability to become successful in many things. It is a foolish mistake to suppose that if life cannot go forward in its preferred channel, the best chance of life is missed. Early taste and early aptitudes often fail to reveal the larger possibilities of endowment. Often men become eminent in directions of which not only there was no early promise but apparent indication of lack of ability. So that, after all, the major factor in determining what life work is best becomes not the natural but the spiritual. Both are important, but the spiritual should be dominant. Therefore family counsels about choice of life work for the developing children will be greatly aided by making them a matter of habitual and earnest prayer.

There is one form in which parental preference sometimes manifests itself in a particularly offensive and hurtful manner. For example, the

desire of a father to have a son become his associate in business is a perfectly natural and proper desire. When such a relationship does develop, such a father and such a son are favored beyond many. They ought to thank God seven times a day.

It has already been mentioned that overhead pressure in the home toward any vocation is something to be guarded against. There is a more subtle thing than that to be guarded against. Partiality for one child may unconsciously lead to giving a better chance to the favorite than to the others. Partiality produces unhappiness in the home, and on that account alone will be rigorously guarded against by all good and honest parents. The Bible gives an unlovely picture of the brood of evils growing out of secretly cherished partiality. "Isaac loved Esau, because he did eat of his venison: and Rebekah loved Jacob." Both parents cherished a wickedly partial love for their respective favorites, and all-around suffering followed. But worst of all, the natural evil in the hearts of the boys was fostered by that vicious parental partiality. From that day to this, partiality in the home has never failed to leave its blight.

But home unhappiness, lamentable as it is, is

not the worst thing about such partiality. The bitterness entailed by the sense of injustice, bad as it is, is not the worst thing about it. Altogether the most pernicious thing about it is that the unfavored child is not given a full, fair chance for development. All children in the same home are not equally gifted, and cannot be expected to occupy equally large spheres of service. It is often true that the less gifted occupies the more conspicious position. It sometimes happens that the less deserving gets the better chance. True enough, family fortunes may change, and advantages given to older children may not be possible for the younger. Or it may be that in the youth of the older children poverty ruled, while plenty came along at the right time to give the younger children superior advantages. Such differences carry no sting. It is the difference that plain partiality makes that does the mischief, that ought to have and can have no place in the home God meant.

There is a very beautiful tradition in certain choice homes. The future of each child is of so much importance in the aspirations of the whole family, that all together are ready for any sacrifice to give the eldest child the best possible

chance for an education. Then, when school days are finished for that member of the family, and life is established in the earning period, this young breadwinner turns in a good portion of income for the education of the younger brother or sister, and so the service keeps going the round of the family. In due time all the children have found their place in the world's work, and so long as any of them live, they are bound together in ever increasing family affection. Among such there is never any quarrel over family inheritance. They have made for themselves complete defense against the covetousness that all too often turns brothers into bitter enemies.

While it is not right either to coerce decision in the selection of vocation or to withhold from the humblest member of the family the fullest and fairest chance for self-development, it is right and a high responsibility to surround the children with such influences as will invite their souls. The books that are read, the pictures that are on the walls, the companions that are encouraged, the guests that are frequently invited, the admirations that are often expressed in the family conversations, all do their quiet work in awakening the interest and inspiring

the ambitions of the children. The story of an inland home from which went several sons to become sailors is eloquent of the legitimate and dutiful ways in which parents may do their proper part in helping their children to choose callings that will both make the sons and daughters good and useful men and women and bless the old age of the parents themselves. It was found that these sailor boys had grown up in a home where there was a picture of an ocean scene, a beautiful and stirring picture, arresting to the eye of every visitor, calling forth admiring comments.

It was once the ambition of almost every devout home to have one of its sons a preacher of the gospel. There was little lack in the supply of candidates for the ministry, no lack at all due to absence of ambition to become such on the part of young men. Why was that? In part, because then the preacher was the parson, the chief person of the community, usually the best educated, the most traveled, the most talked about, the most admired. His picture was that most frequently before the imagination of the young. And now? In all too few homes the picture of a good minister of Jesus Christ is kept before the imagination of the young. On

the contrary, an altogether different picture is playing before that imagination. The greater concern is not that home influences should conspire to invite all young men into the ministry, although more, very much more, of that kind of home influence is needed. The greater concern should be that such home pictures will abound as will capture the imagination of the young to enlist definitely in the service of Jesus Christ, somewhere, that any calling considered at all will have as its major requirement that it offers the most inviting chance to invest life as Jesus Christ would want it invested.

When that situation is developed there need be no anxiety about who will be ministers, or who will be missionaries, or who will be merchants, or physicians, or farmers, or Congressmen. The Master will say what each shall do, and in the doing of that, whatever it happens to be, will be the full glory of living. In the measure that such conditions prevail, the question of a choice of life work sloughs off its perplexities and simplifies toward an appreciation of where the most urgent need is. To create an atmosphere in which children grow up, and get their minds opened, and realize their individuality, and look upward for their leadership, counting

all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ's will in their lives, is the highest achievement possible to any home.

That way lies the road to recompense of reward for all the toil and the patience and the pain and the renunciation involved in having children. In such a home it is realized that God gives back "good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over," into the bosoms of parents. The bosom is the storehouse of recompense of reward not into their bins, not into their banks, but into their bosoms. A man sows wheat in his field, and reaps good measure and fills his bins with wheat. A man sows money in his investments, wisely selected, and he reaps returns by income for increase of his bank balance. Bins and banks are storehouses of rewards in kind, not recompense of reward. This rich man sows the wealth of his life in children. All his life on relatively small income, he managed to put ten thousand dollars and more into the education of his children. In his old age that ten thousand dollars would look mighty good to him. But he does not expect or want a dollar back. He wants recompense of reward; he wants "good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over," not in his bins, nor yet in his

bank, but in his bosom. The character, the occupations, the usefulness, the happiness, of his children, the onward flow of his lifeblood through their veins in the service of Jesus Christ, constitute for him the blessedness of life.

To get married and stay married until death divides; to live together after God's ordinance of marriage; to love, honor, cherish, and comfort each other; to see the distant goal and embrace its promise afar off; to do each a proper part, now individually, now jointly, and always in loving coöperation; to lay by in store for the future by proper thrift; to keep God always in the midst and in control; to honor him with their substance and in ever-expanding service; to have and rear children; to love and lead these into the Kingdom and into capacity service for the Kingdom; to make father and mother love a progressive demonstration of the love of God; to see children, well mated and happily married, to perpetuate their name and their Christian ideals—these and suchlike things form the highway to the home God meant for man, whom he made "in his own image, . . . male and female."